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MADAME LA COMTESSE DU BARRY

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DU BARRI

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY THE TRANSLATOR OF "VIDOCQ"
(H. T. RILEY)

IN FOUR VOLUMES—VOLUME II



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MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DU BARRI

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EAGERLY as I longed to hear the explanations of the Duc de Choiseul, I felt but little inclination to enter upon terms of friendship with him. I knew well that he had used every art to circumvent my plans, and had called to his aid the assistance of a certain M. Delisle, an officer and man of letters, of humble birth, possessing as little virtue as talent. This Delisle was commissioned to overwhelm me with epigrams and songs, circulated amidst the first circles, despite their coarseness and disgusting style. Possibly these last-named qualities were, but an additional reason for their being so universally read and quoted. However, M. de Choiseul, finding that all his schemes failed to injure me in the King's opinion, adopted another plan; and upon this occasion he sought the assistance of a justly celebrated man, M. de Voltaire, whose pen was employed, not to insult me, but to recommend a treaty of peace with the Duke. It was

easy to perceive, from the tone of the letter and a poetical epistle which accompanied it, that both had been written at the instigation of the Choiseul cabal. I regret that I can not give you here a copy of them, as they were stolen from me, probably by some admirer of M. de Voltaire. The letter was a masterpiece of wit and elegance for the peculiarity of circumstance under which my correspondent addressed me appeared to have given more grace, delicacy and freedom to his pen. As for the verses all I now recollect of them is that M. de Voltaire very flatteringly apostrophised me as Venus! There was nothing in them at all worthy the high reputation of their writer and any of our second rate poets M. de la Harpe or M. Marmontel could have equalled them without much effort. And here I will candidly avow that in spite of the excellent taste and tact possessed by M. de Voltaire he never appeared to me to comprehend the art of praising. I trust I shall have your pardon if I venture to say that M. de Voltaire never could have succeeded in administering praise or compliment from the total absence of that good nature and genuine warmheartedness which are equally as essential as tact or taste. His compliments always appear to me tinged with malice and he seems even when offering them to be jesting with the person to whom they are addressed as well as acting against his own wishes and intentions. Perhaps these remarks may seem to you my friend both unnecessary and unreasonable and as I am not disposed to insist upon their justness I will change my subject.

About this period I received a piece of attention anything but gratifying if considered in a strictly honourable sense. The contemptible Chevalier de la Morliere who detested me and subsequently pursued me with rage presumed to dedicate to me some wretched collection of his compositions, and I had the weakness to accept the dedication. I had even the still greater folly to receive its author at my house. This piece of condescension injured me greatly. Until that period I had not like Madame de Pompadour shown myself the protectress and patroness of men of letters and even my

warmest friends could not deny that in stepping forward as the encourager of literature I had made a very unfortunate choice in selecting the Chevalier de la Morlière as the first object of my patronage. But how could I have done otherwise? The Prince de Soubise, who found this man serviceable upon many occasions, would have sacrificed anything to promote his advancement, and I have been assured that had the Marshal taken half the pains on the day previous to the battle of Rosbach we should not have left it so disgracefully.

The King well knew the unfortunate Chevalier for a man as destitute of modesty as merit. When, therefore, he saw his book upon the mantelpiece of my drawing-room, he said :

“So you are the inspiring muse of the Chevalier de la Morlière. I only warn you, when the day comes for him to be hanged, not to ask me to pardon him.”

“Be assured,” replied I, “that I will never deprive the Place de Grève of one so formed to do honour to it.”

In fact, the Chevalier was within an ace of reaching it before his friends anticipated, for very shortly after this conversation he was guilty of the most detestable piece of knavery I ever heard of. He learned that an unfortunate young man from the country, into whose confidence he had wormed himself, was to receive 15,000 livres on his father's account. He invited him to supper, and, by the aid of two villains like himself, stripped him of his last sou. Not satisfied with this, he wrote the father such an exaggerated account of his son's loss and general bad habits that the enraged and irritated parent procured an order to confine his son at St. Lazare! Did you ever hear of a more infamous and accomplished rogue than my honourable *protégé*? However, I shall give him up to his fate, be it good or bad, and proceed with the relation of my affair with the Duc de Choiseul.

I had named to Madame de l'Hôpital the hour at which I could receive the Duke. She had requested, in pursuance of her directions, no doubt, that the conversation between

us should take place either amidst the groves of Versailles or in the labyrinth of Marly, the self-love of M. de Choiseul inducing him to desire that this interview should be so contrived as to wear the air of a mere chance *rencontre*. To this I would not consent, saying that it did not suit my pleasure to quit the house, and that when a gentleman solicited the favour of speaking to a lady it became his business to wait upon her, without expecting she should come in search of him, and, in spite of all the arguments of Madame de l'Hôpital, I persisted in my determination. She had no alternative but to submit, and I awaited the coming of M. de Choiseul on the following day.

The Duc de Choiseul possessed a greater reputation than his talents were entitled to, and his advancement was more attributable to his good fortune than his merit. He had found warm and powerful assistants in both philosophers and women. He was a confirmed egotist, yet passed for a man who cared little for self. He was quick at matters of business, and he obtained the character of a deep and profound politician. It must, however, be admitted that he was witty, gallant, and gifted with manners so elegant and fascinating that they never failed to remove the first unfavourable impression caused by his excessive plainness. The tide of public favour was with him, and, in order to contest it, it required all the influence of a woman, and that woman to be no less than the beloved mistress of the King of France.

He presented himself before me tastefully and magnificently dressed, both look and voice wearing the stamp of high born pride and haughtiness. Nevertheless, amidst all this pomp, it was evident that he did not entirely feel the ease he assumed, and that a species of remorse rankled at his heart, notwithstanding the courtier-like gallantry with which he had invested himself.

"Madam," said he, bowing twice most profoundly, "the moment has arrived which I have long most ardently desired."

"The fault has not been mine, my lord," said I, "that it

has been delayed until now. My door has never been shut against any visit you might have honoured me with."

"Ah! madam, why have I not known this sooner? Some evil planet ruled my thoughts when it occurred to me that I might not be so happy as to meet with a favourable reception."

"There, my lord, you were indeed in error; for though I might not feel a very tender friendship towards you whilst supposing I had many causes for complaint, I could not refuse you those marks of respect your rank and station entitle you to receive."

"Then, madam, I may flatter myself that I should have been kindly received?"

"Yes, sir, you would ever have been welcome. But not those belonging to you, for I will be perfectly candid—always excepting the Duchesse de Choiseul, for whom I entertain the greatest veneration and respect."

"She is indeed well worthy the exalted opinion you express of her, and had I followed her advice I should not have been found amongst the ranks of your enemies."

"You confess the fact, then, M. le Duc?" said I.

"I trust, madam, you will not take advantage of an inadvertent expression to turn it against myself. What I fear is that, without ever having been your enemy, I may have passed for such in your estimation; and such indeed is the cruel position in which I am placed."

"Stay! my lord Duke," cried I; "be candid, and acknowledge that you are my enemy, as you have ever been, and that it is only because there has been war between us that you have now come to conclude a treaty of peace."

"Peace or war, madam," replied he, "as you please to will it; all I will admit is that things have turned out most unfavourably for my wishes. Your arrival at Versailles, your grace, beauty and wit excited universal jealousy; and amidst the general panic caused by your all-excelling merit, was it not necessary that I, too, should keep myself on my guard? For the first time in my life a beautiful woman became an object of alarm to me. You may further believe

me when I protest that, at the outset, I warmly defended you. But how could I wage war against so many? how oppose the general torrent? It bore me down.'

"And you fear lest it should carry you beyond your depth and would fain return to *terra firma*. Is it not so, my lord Duke?"

At this ironical speech an expression of heavy displeasure rose to the countenance of M. de Choiseul. He remained for several minutes like a man who fears to trust himself to reply, then added

"Madam, when I solicited the favour of this conversation it was with the sincerest desire of adjusting all differences between us, and it would but ill advance that purpose were I now to reply to you with warmth and petulance. Condescend, on your part, to lay aside sarcasm and raillery. You have already too many advantages over me, and it would ill accord with your wonted generosity to insult a half conquered foe."

"You are right, my lord," answered I, "jests and re crimination will effect nothing, let us rather proceed at once to consider what is best for the interests of both."

"Willingly," replied he. "Now you speak to the purpose, and as I was prepared to hear you, are you inclined for a serious discussion of our business?"

"Pray begin, my lord, I am all attention."

"Well, madam, I deeply regret all that has passed, and deplore that my friends and part of my family should be disagreeable to you, I take upon myself to engage that their hostility shall end, and am willing to afford you the most perfect satisfaction upon this point. Impressed with the highest respect for His Majesty, and the most lively desire to serve him, I ask for nothing more than to be on good terms with those he loves, and as for the future, my unshrinking loyalty may be relied on."

"I am well assured of it, my lord Duke, and likewise that you have never taken any part in the calumnies which have been aimed at me. Let us, then, forgive the past, and since we are agreed as to the future, let us speak but of the present. I have friends fitted to serve the King, whose ambition leads

them to aspire to that honour. What will you do to assist them ? ”

“ Ere I promise that, madam, it is necessary I should be acquainted with them.”

“ What would it avail to name them to you ? You perfectly well comprehend to whom I allude. I am resolutely decided to support them, and to employ for this purpose the friendship with which His Majesty deigns to honour me.”

The Duke coloured deeply at these words.

“ Then, madam,” said he, “ you would fain strip me to enrich others ? ”

“ No, my lord, I ask but a division of your possessions. You cannot have everything ; and it would not be fair that our reconciliation should be profitable to you only.”

“ I did not anticipate, madam, in coming hither, that you would command me to offer up myself as a sacrifice upon an altar raised by you to the interests of your friends.”

“ Meaning to say, my lord Duke, that you will keep everything to yourself. I cannot compliment you upon your liberality, however much I may for your candour.”

“ Madam, I have never since my entry into the Ministry sought to live at the expense of my country ; and, let me resign my office when I may, I shall retire loaded only with debts, whilst you and your friends draw large revenues from the nation.”

The conversation became warm and angry ; the Duke and myself, with crimson cheeks and inflamed countenances, surveyed each other with haughty defiance. At length he added :

“ I had hoped that I should have quitted you more kindly disposed towards me.”

“ And I, my lord, fancied that you were coming with an ardent desire for peace ; but no, the spirit of your sister leads you astray, and you would fain punish me for her absence from Court.”

“ Madam, I beseech you, leave my sister in peace ; she has gone—that ought to satisfy you. We will not, if you please, speak of her.”

“ I only wish that she would likewise do me the honour to

be silent respecting me. I am not ignorant that she continues to aim her slanders at me from afar as she did when near me. One might suppose that the sole object of her journeyings was but to excite all France against me."

"Madam, you are mistaken. My sister——"

"Continues to play the same part in the country as she did in Paris. She detests me because I happen to have youth and beauty on my side. May her hatred last for ever."

"Ah! madam, say not so, for with your charms you are indeed too formidable an antagonist, and the more so as I clearly perceive you are not inclined for peace."

"At least," said I, "the war on my side shall be fair and open, and those belonging to you have not always waged it with me upon those terms."

The Duke merely warded off this last assertion by some unmeaning compliment, and we separated greater enemies than ever.

The first person to whom I could communicate what had passed was the Duc d'Aiguillon. He listened to my recital without any decided expression of his opinion, but no sooner had I concluded than he took me by the hand and pressed it with a friendly grasp.

"How I congratulate you," said he, "upon the good fortune which has extricated you from this affair. Do you know that a reconciliation with the Duc de Choiseul would have involved your inevitable disgrace? What evil genius counselled you to act in such a manner?"

"I fancied I was doing right," said I, "in thus proving to the King that I was not an unreasonable woman."

"The Choiseuls," replied he, "would have entangled you in their nets, and, separated from your real friends, would have made you the innocent author of your own destruction. Tell the King just so much, that the Duc de Choiseul has been to see you, that you conversed together some time, and that he has offended you more than ever."

"I promise you, my kind friend," said I, "to follow your advice."

When next I saw the King I apprised him of the visit.

"That does not astonish me," said Louis XV. "The Duke is anxious to be on friendly terms with you."

"He has, then, taken a very contrary road to arrive at my friendship," said I. "If he really desires that we should be on good terms, he must conduct himself very differently." And there the conversation ended. But several days afterwards, having sent away my *maître d'hôtel*, with whom I had reason to be dissatisfied, and the King appearing surprised at seeing a fresh countenance amongst my household, I said to him, "Sire, I have got rid of *my* Choiseul; when will it please you to get rid of yours?" The King, without replying to me, began to laugh; in which, for want of a better termination to my remark, I was constrained to join.

CHAPTER II

Dorine—Mademoiselle Choin and the Marechal d Uxelles—Zamor—
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 —The Countess writes again—Madame du Barri and Sophie—Louis
 XV and Madame du Barri

AMONG the number which composed my household were three beings who played conspicuous parts in my establishment, and who received the kindest caresses in honour of their mistress. These three favoured objects were Dorine, Zamor and Henriette. Following the order—or disorder—in which I have written thus far, I will first introduce my dear Dorine to your notice.

Sweet, beautiful Dorine! how amiably affectionate and attached to thy mistress wert thou! The poor animal still exists. For I would have you know that I am speaking of a most faithful little dog—now, indeed, grown old, asthmatic and snappish, but, fifteen years since, distinguished for her lightness, swiftness and grace, for her pretty little countenance, white teeth, large sparkling eyes, long tufted tail, and, above all, for her snow white coat, spotted here and there with the most beautiful brown.

Dorine was just three months old when Madame de Montmorency brought her to me in her muff. Her throat was adorned with a rich gold collar, bearing the Du Barri arms and clasped with a large sapphire surrounded with diamonds. The moment she saw me, Dorine leaped upon my lap with the most endearing familiarity, and from that period has never quitted me. My train of courtiers likewise hastened to become those of the new favourite, and pastrycooks and confectioners raved their brains to procure

tempting morsels for the gentle Dorine. She sipped her coffee daily from a golden saucer, and Zamor (between whom and Dorine a mutual dislike existed) was appointed her cupbearer. The wonderful instinct of the highly-gifted animal soon taught her that although she had free permission to bark at all the rest of the world, there was one person in it to whom it behoved her to show herself in her most gracious and smiling moods. Who this person was I leave it to your sagacity to divine. She, however, indemnified herself for this extra complaisance by barking and biting at all who approached; and the handsomest, best turned leg in the Court was not secure from the sharp teeth of Mademoiselle Dorine. Nevertheless, all vied in praising and fondling her, and I was enchanted with the general admiration she excited, as well as the attention she received. One day, when exultingly relating to the Duc d'Aiguillon the cares and praises lavished on my dog, he replied, "The Grand Dauphin, son of Louis XIV., after the death of his wife, Marie Christine of Bavaria, secretly espoused Mademoiselle Choin. The Maréchal d'Uxelles, who was not ignorant of this marriage, professed himself the most devoted friend of the lady. He visited her regularly morning and evening, and even carried his desire to please her so far as to send a servant with a dish of grilled hare for the house-dog, who had a particular fancy for game dressed in that manner. These attentions and assiduities were faithfully continued for several years till the Grand Dauphin died, and then—no more morning and evening visits, no more presents to either mistress or dog. Apply the story well," added the Duke, as he terminated his recital. Unfortunately the application of the tale presented itself but too soon, and I have experienced the sad truth of the history of Mademoiselle Choin. At the death of the King so did my visitors disappear; and poor Dorine has partaken of the disgrace of the Comtesse du Barri.

The second object of my regard was Zamor, a young African boy, full of intelligence and mischief; simple and independent in his nature, yet wild as his country. Zamor fancied himself the equal of all he met, scarcely deigning

to acknowledge the King himself as his superior. This son of Africa was presented to me by the Duc de Richelieu, clad in the picturesque costume of his native land—his head ornamented with feathers of every colour, a short petticoat of plaited grass around his waist, while the richest bracelets adorned his wrists, and chains of gold, pearls and rubies glittered over his neck and hung from his ears. Never would anyone have suspected the old Marshal, whose parsimony was almost proverbial, of making such a magnificent present.

In honour of the tragedy of *Alzire* I christened my little negro Zamor, to whom by degrees I became attached with all the tenderness of a mother. You ask me why? Indeed, that is more than I can tell. Perhaps at first I looked upon him as a sort of puppet or plaything, and then, imperceptibly to myself, became passionately fond of my little page. Nor was the young urchin slow in perceiving the ascendancy he had gained over me, and, in the end, in abusing his influence, and he attained, as I have before said, an almost incredible degree of insolence and effrontery. Still, I pardoned all his folly, and amused myself from morning to night with watching his nimble fingers perform a thousand tricks of jugglery. Even now that I have lost the gaiety of my happy days, when I recall his irresistibly comic ways, I catch myself laughing like an old simpleton at the bare recollection of his monkey feats. I could relate twenty of his mischievous pranks, each more amusing than the other. I will, however, excuse you from hearing nineteen of them upon condition that you shall listen to the twentieth, which I select as being the shortest.

One day, upon which I had invited some select friends to dinner, a superb pie was brought to table. It was a present which the ungallant M. de Maupeou had had the politeness to send me in the morning. One of the company proceeded to cut it, when scarcely had he pierced the crust than its perfidious contents proved to be an immense swarm of cockchafers, which spread humming and buzzing all over the chamber. Zamor, who had never before seen these insects, began to pursue them all over the room, buzzing and humming as loudly as they did. The chase lasted a

long time; but at last the poor cockchafers, weary of carrying on the war, and mistaking the peruke of M. de Maupeou for an impregnable fortress, flew to take refuge there. What did Zamor do but run to the Chancellor, snatch off his wig, and carry it in triumph to a corner of the room with its colony of cockchafers, leaving us all to admire the bald head of the chief magistrate. I could willingly have enjoyed a hearty laugh at this scene, but, out of respect for M. de Maupeou, I feigned to be much displeased with Zamor, whom I desired one of the attendants to flog for his rudeness. However, the guests and the Chancellor uniting in entreaties that I would pardon him, I was obliged to allow my assumed anger to give way to their request, and the culprit received a pardon.

There was but one person in the world whom Zamor really feared; he was, however, on good terms with all my friends, and did not disdain the society of the King. You have heard that the latter, by way of amusement, bestowed on my little negro the title of Governor of the Pavillon de Lucienne, with a revenue arising therefrom of a thousand crowns, and that the Chancellor caused the necessary papers to be prepared and delivered to him sealed with the State seal.

But of all the persons who visited me, the one most beloved by Zamor was Madame de Mirepoix, who never came without bringing him amusing presents or some sweetmeats. The sight of her threw him into ecstasies of delight; and the moment he caught sight of her he would clap his hands, leap with joy, dance around her, and kiss her hand, exclaiming, "Ah! Mame la Chale!" (Ah! Madame la Maréchale). The poor Maréchale always dreaded meeting the King when she came to visit me and Zamor; for the great delight of His Majesty was to make my little negro repeat a name of Israelitish origin, which he did in so ridiculous a manner that the modesty of my fair friend was most shockingly put to the blush.

One person alone never vouchsafed to bestow the slightest glance of encouragement upon my little imp of

Africa, and this was Comte Jern, who even went so far as to awe him into silence either by a frown or a gesture of impatience. His most lively tricks could not win a smile from the Count, who was either thoughtful or preoccupied with some ambitious scheme of fortune. Zamor soon felt a species of instinctive dread of this overpowering and awe inspiring genius, whose sudden appearance would chill him in his wildest fits of mirthful mischief, and send him cowering to a corner of the room, where he would remain huddled together and apparently stupefied and motionless till the Count quitted the apartment.

At the moment of my writing this Zamor still resides under my roof. During the years he has passed with me he has gained in height, but in none of the intellectual qualities does he seem to have made any progress, age has only stripped him of the charms of infancy without supplying others in their place: nor can I venture to affirm that his gratitude and devotion to me are such as I have reason to expect they should be,¹ for I can with truth affirm that I have never ceased to lavish kindness on him, and to be, in every sense of the word, a good mistress to him.

There was one member of my establishment, however, whom I preferred either to Dorine or Zamor, and this was Henriette, who was sincerely attached to me, and who, for that very reason, was generally disliked throughout the Castle. I had procured a good husband for her, on whom I bestowed a post which, by keeping both himself and his wife in the close vicinity of the Castle, prevented my kind friend from quitting me. However, my poor Henriette was not fated to enjoy a long connubial felicity, for her husband, being seized with a violent fever, in a fit of delirium threw himself from a window into the court below and was taken up dead. Slander availed herself even of this fatal catastrophe to whisper abroad that the death of the unhappy man arose from his deep sense of his wife's misconduct.

¹ This wretch whom the Comtesse du Barri loaded with her favours and benefits conducted her to the scaffold — Ed

and infidelity. This I can positively assert was not the case, for Henriette was warmly and truly attached to him, and conducted herself as a wife with the most undeviating propriety. The fact was that Henriette had drawn upon herself a general hatred and ill-will because she steadily refused all gossiping invitations, where my character would have been pulled to pieces and the affairs of my household discussed and commented upon: there, indeed, she had sinned beyond all hope of pardon.

She it was who pointed out to me the perfidious conduct of the Duc de Villeroi. This gentleman from the very beginning of my rise in the Royal favour had demonstrated the most lively friendship for me, of which he sought to persuade me by the strongest protestations, which, weak and credulous as I was, I implicitly believed, until one day Henriette, availing herself of my being quite alone, let me into the secrets of my establishment, and furnished me with a key to the assiduities of M. de Villeroi.

Amongst the females in my service was one named Sophie, young, beautiful both in face and form, of a sweet disposition, and every way calculated to inspire the tender passion. M. de Villeroi felt the full force of her charms, and became the whining, sighing lover—her very shadow. Up to this period I had had no cause of complaint against M. de Villeroi, and certainly I should not have interfered with his plebeian flame had he not thought proper, when questioned by my enemies as to his continual presence at the Castle, and great assiduities there, to protest that his visits thither were not in honour of my charms, but for those of my waiting-maid. However, my vanity had rendered me his constant dupe.

I felt perfectly astonished as I listened to Henriette's recital, and when she had ceased I conjured her to tell me candidly whether she had not invented the whole tale either out of spite to Sophie, or with a design to make me break off further friendship with the Duke. This she most solemnly denied, and recommended me to make enquiries amongst my friends, who would be compelled to bear tes-

timony to the truth of all she had asserted. I determined to do so, and the first person whom I was enabled to interrogate respecting the affair was the Bishop of Senlis. This prelate came frequently to see me, and I found his society each day more pleasing. He served me as a kind of gazette of all that passed with the Princesses, in whose opinion I had still the misfortune not to be in the very highest estimation. When occasion required it, M de Roquelaure would venture to take my part, and that without making a single enemy—for who could be offended with one so good, so affable, so full of kindness towards all? In fact, the worthy Bishop was so fortunate as to obtain the love of every person who knew him, and, in the most select society of opposing parties, each would reserve a place for good M de Roquelaure.

When I questioned him as to his knowledge of the affair, his embarrassment was evident.

‘What a world is this!’ cried he. “Why, let me ask, do you listen to those who repeat such mortifying tales to you?”

“Because, my lord, my friends will not see me made the sport of a heartless and perfidious friend, and, if you entertain the slightest regard for me, I conjure you to tell me all you know upon the subject.”

“And do you, my good madam, conceive that it would become my sacred calling to speak ill of my neighbour? Besides, surely you would not attach any belief to the idle reports spread about the Castle by ill disposed persons?”

‘All this has nothing to do with my question, my lord,’ resumed I. “I ask you once again, whether you ever heard the Duc de Villeroy assign his passion for one of my women as the reason of his visits to me? Have you, my lord Bishop? I entreat your answer.”

“Madam, I have not,” said the good prelate, colouring deeply.

“Ah! M de Roquelaure,” cried I, “you must not say Mass to-morrow, for I greatly fear you have just committed a certain fault which is styled fibbing.”

The Bishop made no reply, and his silence spoke volumes of confirmation.

Scarcely had he quitted me than the Duc d'Aiguillon entered, to whom I put the same question; and he frankly confessed that the excuse alleged to have been used by the Duc de Villeroi was strictly the expression of that gentleman.

"I was wrong," said the Duke, "not to have mentioned it to you, but I was silent from a desire to preserve peace between you. Now that the affair has been revealed to you, I will not sully my lips with a falsehood for the pleasure of upholding an unprincipled man."

"I will not ask you to tell me more," replied I. "I know enough to make me despise the cowardly spirit of him whom I reject as unworthy of my friendship." So saying, I ran to my writing-table and wrote to the Duc de Villeroi the following note:

"MONSIEUR LE DUC,—I love my friends, with all their faults, but I cannot pardon their perfidy; and since, from what I have heard, I am left to conclude that, but for the charms of my attendant, Sophie, I should not have been favoured with so many of your visits, I now write to warn you that I, this day, dismiss the unfortunate object of your admiration from my service, and therefore recommend you to cease all further communication. Your presence in my house would be anything but agreeable to me; and since the fair object which has hitherto attracted you will no longer dwell under my roof, I presume your presenting yourself before me would only be more painful than you have hitherto found it. The frankness of my conduct may offend you, but it cannot surprise or grieve you more than your duplicity has pained me.—I remain, with befitting sentiments, Monsieur le Duc, your most humble and obedient servant."

When I had completed my letter I rang, and a footman attended. "Go," said I to him, "carry this note immediately to the Duc de Villeroi, and wait, if it be necessary, the whole day, until you can return with the assurance that you have delivered it into his own hand."

Whilst I was thus speaking to the man, who had been engaged by my steward and had but recently entered my service, I chanced to look at him inadvertently, when my attention was arrested by seeing him rapidly change colour. I could not at the moment conceive what could thus agitate him, and making a sign for him to depart immediately upon

his commission, he slowly left the room, regarding me as he went in such a manner that I could not fail to recognise him. And here, my friend, I must lay aside every particle of self love and vanity ere I can make you a complete confession. The retrospect of my life brings many events of which the remembrance is indeed painful to me, and only the solemn promise I am under to conceal nothing restrains me from consigning many particulars to oblivion. I am once more about to incur the chance of drawing down your contempt by my candour, but before I enter upon the subject, permit me to conclude my affair with the Duc de Villeroi.

My letter was a thunderbolt to the Duke. He, better than anyone, knew the extent of my credit, which he dreaded, lest I might employ it to his injury. He therefore hastened to reply to me in the following words.

MADAME LA COMTESSE —I am a most unhappy or rather a vilely calumniated man and my enemies have employed the most odious means of making me appear despicable in your eyes. I confess that not daring to aspire to you I stopped at the footstool of your throne but I wholly deny the words which have been laid to my charge. I venture to expect from your justice that you will grant me the favour of an opportunity of exculpating myself from so black a charge. It would be cruel indeed to condemn a man without hearing him —I am with the most profound respect &c

To this hypocritical epistle I replied by another note, as follows.

Every bad or unfavourable case may be denied. Monsieur le Duc therefore I am not astonished at your seeking to repel the charge of having uttered the disrespectful words laid to your charge. As for the explanations you offer me they would be fruitless. I will have none with those who have either been my friends or appeared to be such. I must therefore beg you will cease all attempts at a correspondence which can lead to no good results —I have the honour to remain &c

After this business was despatched, I caused Sophie to be sent for to attend me.

"Well, Sophie," said I, "you perceive the confusion you have occasioned through your folly. Is it then true that the Duc de Villeroi has spoken of love to you?"

"Yes, indeed, madam," replied the poor girl, weeping bitterly.

"And you return his passion?"

"I believe so, madam."

This naïve confession made me smile. I continued :

"Then you are not quite sure of the fact?"

"No, madam; for when I do not see him I forget all about it. But when he is before me—so handsome, and so generous—so full of love—I try to make myself equally fond of him; but somehow I cannot help preferring his courier, M. l'Eclair."

These last words completely destroyed all attempts at preserving my gravity, and I burst into the most uncontrollable laughter, which, however, soon gave place to a painful recollection of how soon this young and artless creature, as simple as she was beautiful, was likely to lose this open-heartedness in the hands of her seducer.

"Sophie," said I to her at last, "this unfortunate affair forbids my retaining you longer in my service; I am compelled to send you from me. I trust this noble lover of yours will never forsake you. Take care, however, to conceal from him, should you persist in encouraging his addresses, that he has a rival in the person of his courier, l'Eclair."

Sophie threw herself weeping at my feet. I raised and encouraged her by the kindest words to pursue a right path, but I remained steady in my determination of sending her from me.

I was not mistaken. The Duc de Villeroi became the possessor of poor Sophie, and publicly boasted of having her under his protection. He did not, however, proceed to these extreme measures until he had essayed every possible means of effecting a reconciliation with me, and he employed more than a hundred persons in the vain attempt of inducing me to pardon him. With this view the Maréchale de Mirepoix, whose succour he had implored, observed to me that it was sometimes necessary to feign to overlook an insult. I replied that dissimulation was an art I knew nothing of, nor did I wish ever to acquire it.

"Really, my dear Countess," cried she, "you should not live at Court; you are absolutely unfit for it."

"It may be so," replied I; "but I would rather quit

Versailles altogether than be surrounded by false and perfidious friends."

All the remonstrances of the good-natured Maréchale were fruitless. I could not bring myself to pardon a man who had so openly outraged my friendship.

Directly I saw the King I related the whole affair to him.

"It must be confessed," said he, "that the Duke has behaved very ill towards you, but he has certainly shown his taste as far as regards Sophie. She is a sweet creature."

"Ah! you are all alike," cried I. "You gentlemen think a pretty face an excuse for every fault, and he only deserves blame who can attach himself where beauty is wanting."

"Because he is a simpleton for so doing," said Louis XV. with the utmost gravity, giving me at the same time an affectionate embrace.

CHAPTER III

The Prince des Deux Ponts—Prince *Max*—The Dauphin and Marie Antoinette—The Comtesse du Barri and Bridget Rupert—The Countess and Geneviève Mathon—Noël—Fresh amours—Nocturnal adventure—Conclusion of this intrigue.

ALL my friends were not equally as treacherous as the Duc de Villeroi; and I may gratefully assert I have possessed many true and sincere ones, who have ever faithfully adhered to my fortunes. One in particular I shall mention here, that I may recommend him to your warmest esteem; for, although of high and distinguished rank, he did not despise the good opinion of the meanest citizen. I speak of the Prince des Deux Ponts—Charles Auguste Christian. This Prince, who chanced to visit France during the zenith of my Court favour, was very desirous of seeing me, and both he and his brother were presented to me by the Comte de la Marche, their friend, and they quickly requested the honour of my friendship. Auguste Christian pleased me most by his gentle and amiable manners, although most persons gave the preference to his brother, Maximilian Joseph, better known by the name of Prince Max. Auguste Christian, in the fervour of his attachment, speaking openly to me of the delicacy of my situation, proposed to me, in case of any reverse, that I should seek an asylum in his dominions; and I must do him the justice to say that at the death of the King, far from forgetting his proffer, he lost no time in reminding me of it. Fidelity and attachment such as his is sufficiently rare to merit a place in my journal. The Prince des Deux Ponts was heir presumptive to an immense inheritance—that of the electorate of Bavaria and the electorate Palatine, to the latter of which he was direct heir after the decease of his cousin, the present

Elector I could almost wish that he had already succeeded to these possessions he can never reign too soon for the happiness of his subjects

Prince Max had served in France He was extremely well looked upon at Court, both by the King and the Princesses As for the Dauphiness, prejudiced against him as she was by her mother, she naturally regarded him with an eye of cool mistrust, and manifested her open dislike by never inviting him to any of her parties Prince Max spoke of this pointed neglect to the King, who immediately summoned the Dauphin "My son," said he to him, "I see with regret that Prince Max is never an invited guest at any of your balls and fetes Remember, he belongs to a family which has been our most ancient ally, and do not take up the quarrels of a house which, until your marriage, has ever been opposed in deadly hatred to us

If the Dauphin was not gifted with a very extensive capacity, he was possessed of sufficient plain sense to comprehend and to enter into the views of his grandfather, to whom he pledged his word that henceforward Prince Max should be treated with more respect And he kept his word, for the instant he returned to his apartments he commanded the Duc de la Vauguyon to add the name of Prince Max to the list of invited persons When the paper was drawn out it was carried to the Dauphiness, who was with her husband She read on till she came to the name of Prince Max, which she desired should be erased, but the Dauphin interfered "Oblige me," cried he, "by suffering this name to remain, his ancestors have for ages been the friends of our family, and his alliance may one day be useful to us in Germany

The Dauphiness comprehended the signification of these words, and her fine eyes were filled with tears However, she no longer insisted on the erasure, when her husband, who most tenderly loved her, further declared it to be the King's desire that nothing should be done which could in any way displease the Prince des Deux Ponts He was, therefore, from that period invited to the house of Marie Antoinette, who indemnified herself for this compulsory civility by re

fusing to bestow upon him one single smile or gracious word. It must indeed be agreed that the Dauphiness had brought with her into France too many Austrian notions, which she was long in losing for those of a wife and mother; but now, at the moment of my writing this, she is much changed, and is as true a Frenchwoman as though she had been born and bred in Paris. Unfortunately, the people appear slow in giving her credit for her altered opinions, and to this mistake will she owe the loss of that general love and popularity to which she has such just claims.

Prince Auguste Christian entertained for me a sincere regard, which I returned with the truest friendship. My feelings were as pure and simple as his own, in spite of the odious calumnies with which my enemies have attacked this harmless acquaintance; but their slander in this matter was no worse than the manner in which they spoke of every person who visited me. According to their report, I was the mistress of all who presented themselves. 'Tis well for you, ye courtly dames, that you may convert friends into lovers with impunity; be the number ever so large, none dares arraign your conduct; but for those of more humble pretensions it is indeed considered atrocious to number more than two admirers; should we ask to swell the list to a third—what comments, what scandal, what vilifying reports are in circulation!

In this letter, my friend, I shall speak to you exclusively of myself. You will find little in my conduct to praise, and, I fear, much to blame. You will easily perceive my heart was better than my head; and, dear as your opinion is to me, I write on in the hope that, should my candid avowal lose me any portion of your esteem, it will yet obtain me a larger share of your friendship.

The dismissal of Sophie from my service occasioned a vacancy in my household. Immediately her departure was known I received numberless solicitations from all who heard of it. Three days afterwards Henriette came to inform me that the wife of an attorney of Châtelet solicited the honour of serving me in Sophie's stead, and that she was a good-

looking and respectable person, and might very probably suit me

"Will you see her, madam?" continued Henriette. "She is recommended by the Marquise de Montmorency"

"Willingly," answered I "Desire her to come in"

Henriette left me and quickly returned, introducing the new candidate

At the first glimpse I recognised Bridget Rupert, that haughty girl who had been my early friend and companion at St Aure, but who found it impossible to continue her friendship and favour to a humble milliner's girl The sight of her occasioned me a surprise by no means of a pleasing nature, and the involuntary start I gave evidently recalled me to her recollection In a moment her cheeks assumed the paleness of death, and her self love seemed to suffer the most horrible torments at the light in which our *rencontre* mutually placed us As soon as she could command herself sufficiently to speak, she cried

"Ah! madam, do I, then, appear in your presence?"

"Yes," replied I, "before the poor and humble milliner to whom you so harshly refused your friendship!"

"Fortune has well avenged you, madam," said Bridget, in a melancholy tone, "and as I can easily imagine how unpleasant the sight of me must be, I will hasten to relieve you from it"

These last words touched me, and restored me in a degree to my natural good temper

"Bridget," said I to her, "after the little affection you have ever manifested for me, it would be impossible as well as unwise to take you into my service, but let me know in what way I can best promote the interests of yourself and husband, and I pledge myself to accomplish it for you"

"I thank you, madam," answered she, resuming her accustomed haughtiness "I came to solicit a situation near the person of the Comtesse du Barri Since that is refused me, I have nothing more to request"

"Be it as you please," replied I.

Bridget made me a low curtsy and quitted the room.

Henriette, who had been the witness of this scene, expressed her apprehensions that I should be displeased with her for introducing an unwelcome visitor to me.

"No," cried I, "'tis not with you I am vexed, but myself."

"And why so, dear madam?"

"Because I reproach myself with having in my own prosperity forgotten one of my earliest and dearest friends, who loved me with the tenderest affection. Possibly she may now be in trouble or difficulties from which I might have a thousand ways of relieving her. But it is never too late to do good. To-morrow, early, you shall set out for Paris; when there, go to the Rue St. Martin and enquire for the sign of 'La Bonne Foi'; it is kept by a pastrycook named M. Mathon, of whom I wish you to learn every particular relative to his daughter Geneviève."

My wishes were laws to Henriette, who instantly retired to prepare for her journey. I had not ventured to desire her to glean any information concerning the brother of Geneviève, and yet at the recollection of the handsome Nicolas my heart beat impetuously. With what impatience did I await the return of Henriette! At length she came.

"Well?" said I.

"I have found out M. Mathon," answered Henriette.

"Which—the father?"

"Yes, madam."

"And what is his present occupation?"

"As usual, madam, superintending his kitchen and shop."

"Is he alone in his business?"

"Oh, no! madam; he is assisted by his son, a fine, dark, handsome young man."

"His son, then, lives with him?"

"Yes, madam, and he is married."

"Married! But it is not of this young man I wish to speak, but of his sister—of Geneviève; tell me of her."

"I only learned, madam, that she had married a tailor named Guérard, who, after having been very unsuccessful in

business, died suddenly, leaving her wholly destitute, with two young children

I immediately wrote the following note to my early friend

The Comtesse du Barri having heard of the misfortunes of Madame Guerard and knowing how much she is deserving of a better fate is desirous of being useful to her She therefore requests Madame Guerard will call on her next Monday at two o'clock at her hotel Rue de la Jussienne

Poor Genevieve nearly fainted when she received this note, which was conveyed to her by a footman wearing my livery She could not imagine to whom she was indebted for procuring her such exalted patronage, and she and her family spent the intervening hours before her appointed interview in a thousand conjectures on the subject On Monday, punctually at two o'clock, she was at the hotel dressed in her best, her lovely countenance setting off the humble style of even her holiday garb She knew me the instant she saw me, and, in the frank simplicity of her own heart imagining she could judge of mine, ran to me and threw herself into my arms, exclaiming

"Oh, my dear Jeannette, what pleasure does it afford me to meet you again Oh! I see how it is—you are the friend of the Comtesse du Barri, and it is to you I shall owe my future good fortune, as I do this present mark of her favour

"No, my good Genevieve, cried I, weeping for joy, "she who now embraces you is the Comtesse du Barri

After we had a little recovered ourselves I took my friend by the hand and led her to a sofa, where we seated ourselves side by side Returning to the scenes of our early youth, I related to Genevieve all that had occurred since—my adventures, faults and favour When I had concluded my recital Genevieve commenced hers But it was soon told there is little to relate in the life of a woman who has passed her days in the virtuous discharge of her duties

Our mutual confidences being over, and having again exchanged a most affectionate embrace, I put into the hands of my companion a portfolio containing 30,000 livres in bank

bills. I promised her likewise to obtain for her some lucrative situation. "Do more than this for me!" cried Geneviève. "Since you will still grant me your friendship, secure for me the happiness of occasionally meeting you. I can with truth declare that of all your proofs of kindness and regard that which I most prefer is the pleasure of seeing you."

This ingenuous request touched my heart, and I replied to it by fondly caressing the warm-hearted Geneviève, and assuring her that my purse and my house should be ever open to her. We then resumed our interesting reminiscences, and Geneviève was the first to speak of her brother. At the name of Nicolas I felt the blood mount to my very forehead, and an indefinable sensation passed over me at the mention of him who had possessed my virgin love. I strove, however, to conceal from my friend the powerful emotion which agitated me, and I replied, with apparent tranquillity, that I should be happy to assist her brother with the best of my credit and influence; and I kept my word by obtaining for him, at the solicitation of his sister, some lucrative situation, the exact nature of which I do not now recollect, where they resided together in ease and comfort. I had only to recommend them to the notice of M. de Boulogne, who felt himself much flattered at being selected by me to make the fortunes of my two *protégés*.

From this time Geneviève visited me as frequently as she could, and her society delighted me, whilst in her conversation I found a frankness and sincerity which I had vainly sought for at Court. She had loved me when a simple milliner, and she cherished the same fond regard for me in my improved situation. Her friendship has not forsaken me in my reverses; and I feel quite assured that death only will dissolve the tender friendship which still subsists between us. As for her brother, he spared me much shame and confusion by never seeking my presence: a meeting with him would indeed have overwhelmed me with painful recollections.

And now, my friend, I am about to relate to you an adventure, the bare mention of which covers my cheek with guilty blushes. Fain would I conceal it from you, but my

promise is given to lay my whole heart before you, and it shall be done, cost what it may

I know not why it should ever have been permitted you gentlemen to frame laws which, while they permit you in the gratification of your passions to descend ever so low in the scale of society without any disgrace attaching itself to you from the obscure condition of the object of your search, to us females it is prohibited, under penalty of incurring the utmost degradation, to gratify the inclination of our hearts when awakened by one of more humble rank than our own. A great lord may love a kitchen maid, a noble duke like M de Villeroi, may indulge his fancy for a waiting woman, and yet lose no portion of his dignity or of the esteem in which the world holds him, but, on the other hand, woe to the high born dame who should receive the homage of an obscure citizen, or the noble countess who should lend a favourable ear to the sighs of her *valet de chambre*. The public voice would loud and angrily inveigh against so flagrant a breach of decorum. And why should this be? But, my friend, do you not see in my seeking to defend so weak a cause sufficient intimation that such a justification involves a consciousness of requiring it? Alas! I plead guilty, and will no longer delay the painful confession I have to make

Do you remember a singularly handsome young man, who, during my abode with Madame Lagarde, fascinated me till my very senses seemed bewildered by my passion. You know how he betrayed me, and how, through him, I was expelled the house, as well as the termination of this foolish adventure. You are now to pass over seven or eight years, and take your place with me in the drawing room in which I stood when I rang to summon a servant to convey a letter to the Duc de Villeroi. You may remember what I told you in the last chapter of the person who entered, of his agitation and change of colour, and of his fixing his eyes with deep meaning upon me till he quitted the room—this servant was Noel!

Had I listened to the dictates of prudence I should,

without loss of time, have obtained against him a *lettre de cachet*, which would have freed me from all chance of discovery through his means; but I could not listen to such cold-blooded, though cautious suggestions. One idea only took possession of my mind—the absurd desire to know what had become of Noel since we separated, and by what accident I now found him wearing my livery in the Castle. With this intent I availed myself of the first moment I was secure from interruption to summon him to my presence. He threw himself at my feet, imploring me to pardon his audacity. “Alas! madam,” said he, “I am more unfortunate than guilty. I saw you walking some time since, and I could obtain no rest or peace till I was fortunate enough to obtain admission to your establishment. Punish me for my temerity if you will—expel me from the Castle, have me confined in a prison, I deserve it all; but, voluntarily, I cannot leave this house; and if you will only permit my stay, I solemnly vow you shall see nothing in my conduct but the zeal of an attached and respectful servant.”

I was weak enough to pardon Noel, and shortly after to raise him to the rank of *valet de chambre*, which brought him infinitely too much about me.

Yes, my friend, the woman is, after all attempts to excuse it, blamable for bestowing her affection on one below herself in the scale of society. Nature herself appears to have planted in our bosoms a kind of instinct, which warns us from it, and a prejudice against all those who so degrade themselves. It is different with men. They can confer rank and elevation on the beloved object. A woman should always have reason to look up to and feel proud of the man to whom she consigns her heart. This species of vanity is mixed with the noblest love, and the woman who can overlook it acts from passion of the lowest, basest kind. How easy is it to reason! Alas! why have I not always acted as well as I speak?

I was thus a second time enthralled by Noel, and much more so, too, than I will now tell you. My faithful

Henriette, whose devoted attachment to me kept her ever watchful of my safety and reputation, was thunderstruck at perceiving what I vainly strove to conceal from her, and—as she has since told me—was long in deciding whether to speak to me of the affair, when an unexpected incident arose, which determined her, at every risk of my displeasure, to use her endeavours to put an end to so disgraceful a connection, which must infallibly have ended in my disgrace.

One night, or rather midnight, all was at rest in the Castle, and I was sleeping peacefully in the arms of Noel, when all at once I was awakened by the sudden opening of an outer door, which announced to me the approach of the King, who had merely one more door to open ere he would be in my apartment. Noel terrified, leaped quickly out of bed, and ran to seek refuge in a small chamber adjoining, where Henriette slept. Happily she was yet awake, and, by the light of a night lamp, or *veilleuse*, recognised Noel, who, with clasped hands, conjured her to take pity upon him. Henriette saw the danger, and putting out her hand, seized him, and drawing him rapidly towards her, made him lie down beside her. Noel, struck with her goodness, was preparing to offer her the same marks of his gratitude he had shown me of his respect—but repulsing him, she said in a low voice: “Wretch, think not it is on your account I thus expose my reputation—it is to save that of my beloved mistress. Either conduct yourself with silent respect, or you are lost. At this threat Noel’s courage melted away, and he lay as still as a frightened child. ‘Listen,’ said Henriette: “if you do not quit this place to-morrow at break of day, without seeking to see madam again, I will denounce you to the King, who will inflict upon you the most dreadful punishment.”

Whilst these things were passing in the chamber of Henriette, I did not feel perfectly at ease on my side, and many were the wise reflections I made upon my folly, and many the resolutions I formed never again to expose myself to such imminent danger. Nor did my terrors abate till after

the King had quitted me. At the sound of my bell, Henriette hastened to my bedside.

"My good Henriette," said I to her, trembling from head to foot, "what a night of anxiety have I passed. I must indeed confess——"

"Fear not, my beloved mistress," replied she; "I will watch over your safety, and trust to be enabled fully to provide for it."

I durst not then ask for any further explanation of her words, for such was the ascendancy her good and steady conduct had given her over me that she would certainly have blamed me for my glaring imprudence. I pressed her hand in mute thankfulness; she comprehended my silence and left me to myself.

At the end of some days, seeing nothing of Noel, I ventured to question her as to his fate. She then related to me all you have been told, and added that the day following this shameful and unfortunate night she had lost no time in apprising Comte Jean of all that had occurred, who had quickly despatched Noel out of the kingdom, furnishing him with a purse of 10,000 livres to defray his travelling expenses. Such was the fortunate termination of this disgraceful affair. And now, having completed my painful confession, I will change the subject to others doubtless more calculated to interest you than the recital of such lapses.

CHAPTER IV

The Chevalier d'Arc and Madame de Langueac—Letter from the Chancellor to Madame du Barri—Reply—Letter from Madame du Barri to the Duc d'Aiguillon—His answer—Curious particulars relative to the conference in which the destruction of Parliaments and the Choiseuls was agreed upon—Bond of agreement between the Chancellor and the Duc d'Aiguillon—A hint relative to the poisoning of the Dauphin son of Louis XV.—The Abbé Terray—The Duc de la Vrillière—The Duc de Richelieu—The Duc de la Vauguyon—The King's remark concerning Madame Louise

I HAVE too long abandoned the recital of those events which while they assured the triumph of the Duc d'Aiguillon hastened the fall of the minister Choiseul. I now hasten to resume the proper thread of my narrative, and I forewarn you that the period of which I now am about to write is far more important than that of which I have already written.

The decree of the Parliament of Paris was not long in being followed by those of several other Sovereign Courts, who believed themselves equally competent to pass sentence upon a duke and peer. The most universal clamour arose against the Duc d'Aiguillon, and it might have been said that the kindness of the King's feelings towards this noble man had excited all France against him. The poor Duke most acutely felt this general expression of dislike yet, at the very moment when the Parliamentary storm was raging with its utmost violence on his devoted head he was seen exhibiting himself at the splendid fête given by the Chevalier d'Arc to Madame de Langueac or, more correctly speaking, to the Duc de la Vrillière. Possibly the Duke's intention in taking this step, which appeared as though done to brave his enemies, might have been merely to conceal the deep chagrin he felt from their machinations.

The Chevalier d'Arc was the favoured lover of Madame de Langeac, formerly Madame Substin. The Duc de la Vrillière was well aware of their reciprocal attachment, which did not give him the slightest uneasiness. He certainly was the silliest of the class of men, receiving the Chevalier d'Arc at his house and appearing at all the fêtes he gave; he even carried his folly so far as to endeavour to outdo him in tender attentions to his (the Chevalier's) mistress. What I am asserting is no exaggerated picture. I speak the positive fact, as you will see; and when, in 1772, the fall of the Chevalier had drawn down upon him an inevitable exile, it was with the utmost agony and despair that M. de la Vrillière signed the repulsive *lettre de cachet*. His friends, coming to console with him, surprised him in tears. "Alas!" cried he, to those around him, "what will poor Madame de Langeac think of me? I am about to wring her heart. Yet the fault is not mine; I but obey the positive mandate of the King, which I have opposed as much as I was able."

Such a character appears to me truly ridiculous. I never saw the Duc de la Vrillière without experiencing a strong desire to laugh heartily. Had he not been the nephew of the Duc d'Aiguillon, I verily believe I should have indulged my inclination. However this may be, it is certain that the fête given by the Chevalier formed the general topic of conversation throughout Paris, and my poor friend was universally blamed for his effrontery in appearing at it. I was included in the same disapprobation, and came in for a share of the many epigrams written up on the occasion.

During these discussions I received the following letter from the Chancellor:

"MY DEAR COUSIN,—Could you spare me an hour to have some conversation with you upon several matters of import? I flatter myself that you will not refuse my request when the interest of your friends, their happiness or disgrace, is at stake. I should be most happy if M. le Duc d'Aiguillon would make a third in our party."

I returned for answer:

"MY DEAR COUSIN,—You are certainly the most gallant Chancellor that France has ever boasted of; but you possess one other quality which I admire even more than your gallantry; that of your devotion

to your friends. Be assured I shall have great pleasure in devoting as many hours as you please to the business you speak of and shall expect you to-morrow at twelve. I think you have no council on that day and will consequently be at leisure. Should however the hour I have appointed be an inconvenient one to you favour me by naming any other which you may rely upon it will be faithfully obeyed by me — Yours &c.

When I had despatched this letter, I lost no time in writing to the Duc d'Aiguillon

My LORD — To-morrow at twelve o'clock I shall be most happy to see you if you are not better engaged. Not that I have anything very important to say to you but there is in the world a certain gentleman of the long robe who is very anxious to discuss affairs of consequence to you with me in your presence. Come then I entreat of you to dictate to me what I shall say.

The Duke replied

"I shall not fail madam to attend your orders for to-morrow not with a view to dictate but prepared to admire beforehand whatever the spirit of your benevolence shall inspire you to advance in my behalf. You are my favourable star my guardian angel whose divine protection saved my poor barque from the rocks which would otherwise have dashed it to pieces. Dispose of me as you will my whole life will be too short to prove my gratitude.

On the following day both the Duke and the Chancellor were faithful to their appointment. The Duke arrived first, his impatience had made him outstrip the hour. He spoke to me of the fears with which my note had inspired him, of his dread that the Parliaments of Paris would unite against him, and he enquired my opinion. I could give him no further information on the subject than that he already possessed, and both of us awaited with no small impatience the coming of him who could clear up our doubts. The Chancellor soon arrived, and after the usual salutations, which I made as brief as possible, I abruptly demanded of M de Maupeou his reason for desiring us to meet. "Do not imagine, madam," said he, "that it has reference to any matter of moment, it merely concerns three mere trifles. *first*, to dismiss the present minister, the Duc de Choiseul, *second*, to procure the Duc d'Aiguillon to be his successor, and, *third*, to overthrow every Parliament in the kingdom."

The avowal of these three purposes drew from me an involuntary cry, and the Duke replied, in a gloomy tone :

"It would be more than equal to the labour of a dozen Hercules."

"It shall be accomplished by me alone," said the Chancellor. "I who am no Hercules will accomplish it, provided you, madam, will do me the favour to submit the memorial you see before you to the King, and to support it with your utmost influence."

Thus saying, he put into my hands a large roll of paper tied round with a black riband. I pointed this last circumstance out to the Chancellor with a sort of superstitious dread.

"It has happened entirely by chance," replied he, "and is merely prophetic of the downfall of your enemies."

"Perhaps of your own," cried the Duc d'Aiguillon, with a mournful shake of the head.

"Hope better things," resumed M. de Maupeou. "The King regards you and listens to your opinion. I have some share in his confidence, and my fair cousin there can mould him as she will; and, by the blessing of God, we shall triumph. But, in order to effect so desirable a conclusion, we must first arrange our plan of action, and then proceed to carry it into execution by inspiring the King with jealousy and mistrust of his minister, and then embroiling him in a perpetual rupture with his Parliaments, beginning with those of Paris."

After having thus spoken, the Chancellor looked at us in silence.

"Well, my good cousin," said I, "what is to be the preliminary step in this momentous business?"

"This, madam: that we shall mutually explain our motives and views in entering upon the affair; for, after all, self-interest will be the fundamental principle of our alliance. Deign, my lord Duke, to state explicitly your own reasons and wishes for engaging in the transaction."

"M. de Maupeou," rejoined the Duke, "I will be as candid as yourself, and explain, in a few words, why I am ready to join heart and hand in your project. In the first place, I am

most anxious to extricate myself from my present disagreeable situation, and that, I know well, can never be achieved whilst the Duc de Choiseul remains minister, and so long as the Parliaments of Paris can reckon upon his aid and influence. Consequently, I have strong reasons for desiring the downfall of both the Duke and the Parliaments, and, to effect these ends, I pledge myself to support you, with my utmost power, in whatever scheme you shall concert against them.

"Very well," replied M. de Maupeou. "But, to go further, how far would it suit your ideas to enter into a strict alliance with me that should endure even in the prospect of your being called to the Ministry? for I will not conceal from you that my interest is materially concerned in such a measure."

"I am willing to accept whatever proposition you may make me to that effect."

"Let us, then, engage, by a reciprocal promise, mutually to support each other so long as we shall remain at the head of affairs, and to quit them together in such a way that the disgrace of one shall be the signal of retreat to the other excepting always, what is very unlikely to be the case, that either of us should voluntarily desire to resign the administration."

This proposition appeared to me wholly in favour of the Duc d'Aiguillon, for M. de Maupeou was, in fact, really in the Ministry, whilst the Duc d'Aiguillon, smarting under the weight of a heavy accusation, could scarcely hope to become so. Nor was the latter slow in accepting the treaty.

"Well then," exclaimed the Chancellor, "I will draw out a written agreement to that effect, which we will each of us sign, and, immediately placing himself at my writing table, he drew up the following engagement, which the Duc d'Aiguillon copied, merely changing the names."

"I, the undersigned, Nicolas, Rene Charles Augustin, Chevalier and Chancellor of France, promise to the Duc d'Aiguillon, in the event of his becoming minister, to support him with my best power and interest, and, should he be compelled to resign, I engage at the same time to give up my office of Chancellor, as well as minister, without con-

sidering myself exempted by any consideration—not even His Majesty's most sacred command—from the fulfilment of the solemn engagement I now enter into with him, declaring myself a dishonoured and worthless man if I fail in this my promise.”

These agreements having been dated, signed, and enclosed in an envelope, sealed with the arms of the Duke and M. de Maupeou, the latter placed them in my hands, requesting I would take charge of them until M. d'Aiguillon should be appointed by the King to the Ministry; then I was to deliver to each the written engagement of his colleague. The Chancellor then resumed the subject of his further plans; and so much was I struck with what he said that I availed myself of the moment of their quitting me to copy it into my journal, from which I now transcribe it for your perusal, my friend, in nearly the same words employed by M. de Maupeou.

“The Duc de Choiseul is our greatest and, apparently, most difficult enemy to overcome; nevertheless, the task may be less impossible than it appears upon a first view. The King no longer cherishes any regard for him, but retains him in his office from the impression that he is useful as well as devoted to the interests of monarchy. These ideas it must be our task to efface from the mind of His Majesty, and we may employ two methods of accomplishing this end. In the first place, we may represent him as encouraging the Americans, in a clandestine manner, to hostilities against England, our ally; as embracing the Austrian party with a zeal so excessive as to leave strong cause for suspicion; and, further, as carrying on his intrigues within the Royal dominions by driving the Parliaments to rebel against the Sovereign authority. The Duchesse de Grammont may, unknown to herself, be brought to aid our schemes against her brother; for that purpose we must effect her recall to Court. I am well informed that, in several towns, she has visited the Parliamentarians, to whom she has promised the protection of her brother. Upon her return to Versailles she will doubtless offer to the Duc de Choiseul the aid and assistance of the Parliamentarians. All these proceedings, with every unguarded word which

escapes her, must be carefully collected and brought to the King; then we will strike our last blows; I, in the course of my ministerial capacity with the King, and you, madam, during the familiarity of your conversations with His Majesty. There is nothing our monarch would not listen to from your lips, were it even the charge of having been the instigator of the murder of the late Dauphin."

"What!" exclaimed I, "shall I dare to wring the heart of my kind and confiding master by so detestable a falsehood?"

"Not so entirely a falsehood," replied the Chancellor, "as you may suppose it. Are you acquainted with all the circumstances which preceded the death of this most excellent Prince? Right or wrong, whichever way you may term it, the unfortunate Dauphin was much attached to the Jesuits, whom he firmly believed necessary, or at least useful, to the welfare of the nation. Consequently, their banishment, effected by Madame de Pompadour and the Duc de Choiseul, became a serious grief to him, nor did he ever pardon this latter the part he had taken in the business any more than the infamous suspicions with which he had filled the King's mind relative to the assassination of Damiens. The Prince, although deeply irritated by these vile calumnies, undertook the defence of the Jesuits, and even forgot his rank so far as to intercede for them with the Duc de Choiseul. The insolent reply he received completed the exasperation of his mind, and, in his just anger, he threatened the Duke with his resentment so soon as he should ascend the throne. 'My lord,' answered the Duc de Choiseul, 'I may have the misfortune to become the subject of Your Royal Highness, but most certainly I will never be your servant.'

"No one would presume to insult the heir of a kingdom thus boldly if he had not previously resolved to proceed to the greatest extremities. However this may be, from that moment, the health of the Dauphin began to languish and droop. He died, and his premature end excited in the minds of all men the most violent suspicions. The son of the unfortunate Prince, our present august Dauphin, is in full

possession of all these facts, and well knows on whom to avenge the death of his father. You perceive that all this is not so very improbable as to forbid your conversing with the King respecting it, and certainly this is not the first time you have heard it spoken of."

I then recollected what I had heard from M. de Richelieu during the fêtes given in honour of the marriage of the Dauphiness; and I replied that I did indeed remember hearing something of the same sort from the uncle of the Duc d'Aiguillon.

"Avail yourself of it, then, to promote our common interest," pursued the Chancellor; "and, above all, when the Duchesse de Grammont shall be returned—to effect which you must immediately exert all your energies—you must more particularly show yourself alarmed by these fresh intrigues. Well, my lord Duke, what think you of all this?"

"That you are a wonderfully clever man," replied the Duc d'Aiguillon. "We may reckon much upon the extravagancies Madame de Grammont will inevitably commit, and not less so upon the errors which the Parliaments of Paris and the provinces will not fail to be guilty of. Their obstinacy will offend the King, who, as you know, dislikes all exposure or angry scenes as much as he dreads satire and ridicule."

"Oh," replied the Chancellor, with a sardonic smile, "there is little fear of the Parliaments making a jest of these things; they are much more likely to carry things with too high a hand to stoop to lampooning or epigrams."

"Would the time were already arrived," exclaimed the Duke, "when the King, by striking some decisive blow, might disconcert the machinations of my enemies against me!"

"To accomplish that," answered M. de Maupeou, "we shall require the assistance of our lovely Countess; and I trust that, by following our united counsels, she will be enabled to extricate you from your present unpleasant situation." And, following up his speech by immediate action, the Chancellor proceeded to trace out for me a plan of conduct replete with the greatest skill and talent.

M. de Maupeou possessed a peculiar genius for all that is usually designated intrigue. His enemies have depreciated his powers too much. No ordinary man would have ventured to attempt the ruin of the whole magistracy: to accomplish so daring a work a more than common capacity, as well as a superior courage and audacity were requisite. I think there is little doubt but that M. de Maupeou will be much more highly spoken of by posterity than by his contemporaries.

In addition to the written bond subsisting between them, M. d'Aiguillon and the Chancellor bound themselves by the most solemn assurances of mutual fidelity; and, I must say, from that moment up to the accomplishment of their enterprise, they acted with the most remarkable sincerity. Our league was shortly after strengthened by the addition of two powerful auxiliaries, the Abbé Terray and the Duc de la Vrillière.

The Abbé Terray had two powerful reasons for joining us. The first was, the hatred he bore to the Duc de Choiseul, despite his having entered the Ministry with him; and the second originated in the dislike he entertained for the magistracy, of which he had once been a member, although a treacherous and perfidious one. His fears of these two powers induced him to unite his forces to those of the Duc d'Aiguillon and M. de Maupeou, although, in his heart he felt no regard for either one or the other.

The Duc de la Vrillière had the same deeply-rooted aversion to the Duc de Choiseul; and, like the Abbé Terray, joined our party principally with the view of gratifying his revengeful schemes. The Choiseuls held the Abbé in the most sovereign contempt, and continually played off some trick at his expense, to the great amusement of the whole Court. At the precise period of which I am speaking, they had circulated against himself and his dearly-beloved Madame de Langeac a smart epigram, which had been most successful in its reception. In it they asserted that the old libertine had asked in marriage the hand of the young and lovely Mademoiselle de Polignac, and that his old mistress was furious at such flagrant infidelity. As this little production may

MADAME DU BARRI don me for inserting

not have reached you, I trust you will par
it in my narrative.

“ Des cafés de Paris l'engeance fa-
Qui raisonne de tout, *ab hoc et ab*
Sur ces prédictions redigeant l'almar
Donne pour femme à la Vrillière
La fille du beau Polignac.
Ah ! si l'ingrat avait jamais cette pen-
S'écria Subretin se frappant l'esto-
J'étranglerais comme une autre Méd-
Tous ces Philippotins soi disant d-

blière,
hac.
lach.
séc,
mac,
éc,
Langeac.'

me Delisle who had
my expense; and it

The author of these lines was the sc
already exercised his poetical talents at
must be confessed that they were the bes

Then the Duc de Richelieu and the
joined us. The former detested the
much as he had loved his former mistress
had deeply offended the Marshal by insti-
between him and the famous Duc d'E-
was highly disagreeable to him to recei-
of a favourite without any of the powe-
his advanced age, which precluded his
Ministry, and every other obstacle which
still trusted to be summoned to the m
affairs.

The same ideas actuated the Duc de
religious party indeed supported the m
little influence with the King. Vainly
strengthen their interest through the int-
Louise. This Princess since her profes-
had not been able to exercise a greater
over the mind of her father than b
Louis XV., speaking of her to me, said
child has been the dupe of these hyp-
they were only desirous of wheedling he-
she might assist them to ascend my thr-
will miss their purpose, for I will neit-
by her or by them."

la Vauguyon. The
minister, but they had
had they sought to
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degree of authority
before her seclusion.

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CHAPTER V

The Comte de Maillebois—Comte de Broglie, Minister of the Secret Police—The Comtesse du Barri procures the recall of the Duchesse de Grammont—The Countess and the Duc de Choiseul—The King and the Comtesse du Barri—The Parliaments—Louis XV. in Council—Louis XV. and the Duc de Choiseul—The Countess and the King.

To the confederates, of whom I spoke in my last letter, may be added the Comtes de Maillebois and de Broglie. The former, son to the Marshal of the same name, had high pretensions. Proud of the courage which he had displayed in 1756 at the taking of Fort Mahon, and subsequently during the campaigns in Germany, he looked at the direction of the War Department as a property unjustly detained from him. Had M. de Choiseul thought proper to have bestowed upon him the office of M. de Praslin, all would have been well; but as the Duke had the unpoliteness never to offer it him, he was compelled to throw himself into our party. In other respects, M. de Maillebois was a man of common stamp, vain, presumptuous and arrogant. You are aware that his love of idle gossip drove him into exile; nor should I feel much astonished to hear that his passion for babbling had cost him his life.

The Comte de Broglie was a man of very opposite character and abilities. He was first employed as an ambassador from the Court of France to the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland. In this high office he was principally remarkable for the obstinacy of his character, or, to speak more properly, his determined will. Never was there a more accurate judge of mankind than M. de Broglie. His penetrating glance discovered in an instant their qualities or defects, their ignorance or their talents. No less distinguished as a

soldier than a diplomatist, he had served under his brother, the Marshal, and shared his rich harvest of glory. The manner in which he defended Cassel in 1761 completed his reputation: and Louis XV., justly appreciating his deep acquaintance with the legislature of his country, confided to him the direction of the Secret Police. In this office M. de Broglie showed himself the decided adversary and pitiless censor of M. de Choiseul, whose superior interest enabled him to rid himself of so troublesome a foe by procuring his banishment from Court. Then, by a species of unexampled caprice, but which was fully indicative of the weakness of Louis XV., might be seen, at the same time, a man upon whom the heavy displeasure of the monarch had fallen admitted, nevertheless, into a fixed and regular correspondence with the King himself. The exile of M. de Broglie was, in fact, less a fall than a triumph, which was rendered complete when the King, unable to do without him, recalled him and confided to him anew his former functions.

M. de Broglie returned to the Ministry, breathing vengeance against his rival, and determined to leave no measure untried to wrest the post then occupied by M. de Choiseul into his own hands. I must own that his pretensions were well-founded, and the chances in his favour; and if he were not fortunate enough to reach the head of Foreign Affairs, it was to me only that his failure was attributable, and my influence over the mind of Louis alone prevented that monarch from raising him to it.

The Comte de Broglie had too much sense and tact not to cultivate my favour with all possible assiduity; he even rendered me some important services. His active and energetic mind soon discovered and laid before me a crowd of intrigues I should never have heard a word of from M. de Sartines, however well-informed he might himself be on such subjects. The Chancellor both feared and disliked him; nevertheless he wore the fairest face towards him, loaded him with proffers of kindness, and extolled his every word and action from morning till night. He carried the same duplicity into his advice to me, telling me the

most horrible tales of M de Broglie, at the same time recommending me to affect all possible confidence in him in order to draw him more securely into our interests, and I now bitterly repent the treacherous part I was induced to act in the business. I was born with a frank and ingenuous character, but the air of a Court spoils the best natures. When once we breathe its infected atmosphere, adieu to candour, uprightness, and truth. The poor Comte de Broglie thought himself sure of a firm ally in me, and reckoned not less upon my exertions in his favour than upon his personal interest with Louis XV, and yet—I confess it with shame—I deceived him in the most unworthy manner. What can I tell you further of this nobleman? His conversation was sparkling and brilliant, yet filled with sarcastic observations. The hatred he bore to the Choiseul family was really amusing, from the ingenuity with which he would assign them their different errors, ridiculous manias, and even crimes—the arrogant Choiseul—the insignificant Praslin—poor Stanville—the unprincipled Grammont, in a word, he had bestowed upon every member of the family an appropriate epithet.

The Chancellor Maupeou, the Ducs d'Aiguillon, de Richelieu, de la Vrilliere and de la Vauguyon, the Abbe Terry, and the Comtes de Maillebois and de Broglie were the allies with whose assistance I was about to bring down the already tottering power of the Choiseuls.

The first and, perhaps most mortal blow was dealt by me when I requested of the King to recall Madame de Grammont.

"In the name of Heaven, exclaimed the King, "what can occasion the singular interest you seem to take in this woman?"

"I have no further reason for it, Sire, replied I, "than that I prefer her being at Versailles than in the provinces. She is traversing the kingdom solely with a view of making fresh enemies for me and she has done me much more harm during her exile than whilst she was dwelling at Versailles or Paris.

"Still," resumed Louis XV., "it may be easy to send her to some spot where her accursed tongue may no longer exercise itself at your expense. Surely we can find out some secluded village, where, at least, she will find a difficulty in finding many auditors."

"No, Sire," exclaimed I, "I conjure you to recall her; she will be a continual annoyance to me so long as she is at a distance; and, much as I dislike her ugly countenance, I would rather face my enemy than allow her to go on spreading her mischief far and near."

"Well," rejoined the King, "all I can say is that Madame de Pompadour, in your place, would have adopted a very different line of conduct."

"Ah! but then you know I am better than she was; at least, more forgiving—am I not?"

"Indeed," replied Louis XV., "you are; and you well deserve to be rewarded for such genuine goodness of heart. So be content; the Duchess shall be recalled. I am glad of it for her brother's sake; he grieves much over her absence."

"I do not believe," cried I, "that Madame de Choiseul partakes very deeply of his regret."

"No! by my faith, I should think not," exclaimed the King; "she had need to be even more amiable and perfect than you are to love her haughty, imperious sister-in-law. But remember one thing, the return of the Duchess will be a glorious triumph to the party of the Choiseuls. All the worse for you, my sweet Countess, if hereafter you should have reason to repent your kindness; and whose fault will it have been? Not mine, certainly; but your very own, my dear, charitable friend."

Saying these words, the King made me a profound bow of mock respect. I threw my arms about his neck and embraced him; for I well knew that nothing was more welcome and gratifying to him than these unexpected marks of my attachment. He quitted me, all impatience to put an end to the frigid ceremony which had been established between him and his minister since the departure of the Duchesse de Grammont. He reached his own apartments, and instantly

despatched a messenger to desire the Duc de Choiseul to come to him without delay. The moment the minister entered, "My lord," cried Louis XV., "I authorise you to inform your sister that I permit her to return to Versailles. She will no doubt be anxious to resume her plots and underhanded dealings, but, in order to teach her greater generosity of conduct, as well as to wring her with remorse for her past behaviour, I wish you to let her know that she is indebted for her recall to the generous solicitations of the Comtesse du Barri. As far as my feelings were concerned, I can only say I was very far from thinking of terminating her exile."

I am persuaded that the Duke would have preferred that his sister should not have been pardoned, rather than to owe it to my prayers. However, he loaded the King with thanks and acknowledgments, mingled with the handsomest mention of myself. Nor did he stop there, for, some days afterwards, having supped in the small apartments, he seized the moment when I was standing alone by a window to approach me.

"Madam," said he, "after our late conversation, I know not whether to rejoice or not in the favour you are pleased to bestow on your servant. His Majesty has deigned to apprise me of all your goodness in venturing, unsolicited, to intercede for the termination of my sister's exile. This piece of intelligence was *most gratifying to me*, and it would be even still more so if you would permit me to look upon it as a pledge of your willingness to credit my devotion to your wishes."

"My lord," replied I, "I have not the ill nature my enemies are pleased to give me credit for. I know how necessary the presence of your sister is to your happiness, and I therefore prayed His Majesty not to deprive you of it any longer."

"And was that your sole motive for so uncommon a proceeding, madam?"

"Yes, my lord, my only one. What other could I have had? your conduct and that of your family has rendered all friendship between us utterly impossible." The Duke made

a movement of surprise. I added, "At least, my lord, you will give me credit for the openness and candour with which I have behaved in the differences between us."

The Duke made no reply; but, bowing haughtily, put an end to a conversation which had already excited the greatest curiosity and speculation, although it had lasted but for a few minutes.

As soon as the Duke had quitted me the King approached. "What has De Choiseul been saying to you?" asked Louis XV. "Was he offering up his thanks? Indeed, he owes you plenty."

"Yes, Sire," replied I, "the Duke proffered his acknowledgments and offers of best services. He imagined, I believe, that his politeness might serve as a foundation for a lasting peace between us."

"And peace, my sweet friend, is a blessing never to be rejected," rejoined Louis XV.

"Never, Your Majesty, when it is offered in sincerity; but when it is merely assumed as a mask to conceal the most hostile intentions, it would be bad policy to accept it."

"You are suspicious and mistrustful, my fair Countess."

"I have good reason for being so," cried I, "and ere long Your Majesty will admit the justness of my conduct."

The Duc d'Aiguillon wished to hear from me the subject of my conversation with M. de Choiseul, and I briefly related to him what had passed between us. The rest of the company, not knowing the particulars of our conference, circulated throughout the Castle the most contradictory reports, some affirming that a perfect reconciliation had taken place, and others declaring that a violent quarrel had ensued between us; and the most amusing part of the affair was that each relator of the story told it with the most circumstantial minuteness of detail.

Meanwhile, the famous memorial of M. de Maupeou—the memorial whose sable fastenings had so alarmed my superstitious fears—had been delivered into the hands of the King. One evening when His Majesty came to pay me his accustomed visit, he appeared sad and dejected, nor

could all my gaiety relax his features from their gloomy expression. At last, losing all patience, I exclaimed

"Plague take the hateful causes of Your Majesty's bad spirits !

This burst of petulance drew a smile from the King, who replied

"It is indeed evident that there exist many who have no greater delight than in disturbing my peace of mind and I could almost fear that I have no friends left

"Things have not reached that frightful extremity yet, Sire, answered I "although it is but too certain that France contains many unprincipled characters, whose sole aim is to drive you to desperate measures

"I shall never know peace, resumed Louis XV, "so long as these accursed long robes preserve the power invested in them by the weakness, or credulity, of my predecessors. Do you know anything of a memorial the Chancellor left for me ?

"Tis here, Sire, said I, drawing it from a porcelain vase. 'M de Maupeou gave it me yesterday (I had, in fact, been its guardian for the last fortnight), "and as he told me it contained very important facts, I have been attentively perusing it this morning

"And what do you think of it ?

"I Sire ? I do not presume to understand affairs of State importance. All I can say is, that if the Parliaments appeared to me so dangerous they should not remain four and twenty hours in my service

"Ah, my good Countess, I dare not dismiss them so hastily, they have the whole nation on their side, and their fall would involve me in fearful consequences

"Yet, Sire, rejoined I, "their existence as a body involves you in dangers equally certain and terrible. Their attack upon M d Aiguillon is but the prelude to what they meditate against Your Majesty and if you would remain in tranquillity, some decided blow must be struck

"Go on, go on, exclaimed the King traversing the chamber with hurried steps "do as others have done

force me to take some imprudent step which shall draw down upon my head the hatred of all France."

"Sire," I cried, "you mistake. You are the object of universal love—everything proves it; but, unfortunately, you have not made yourself sufficiently an object of dread, and your forbearance and unwearied clemency have given rise to the mistaken idea that you may be disobeyed with impunity. Were you but to burst like the thunderbolt on the Parliament of Paris, the cowardly members of it would be thankful to remove your just resentment by any concessions: your glorious ancestor, Louis XIV., governed them with a whip and a scourge."

"Yes, yes," replied the King, smiling; "he was always ready booted and spurred. But then he was young and victorious, whilst I am old and——"

Louis XV. stopped, and his forehead was darkened with frowns.

"Yes, Sire," I interrupted, "you are old, indeed; and one might even espy your grey locks, were they not concealed by the thick laurels of Fontenoy."

"Ah! but that is long since."

"Not so long but that everyone remembers it as though it had occurred but yesterday," I said.

"You are a sad flatterer," exclaimed the King, while his fine countenance was lighted up with the pleasing recollection of his early prowess; "but," added he, resuming his serious tone, "do you really believe that an act of firmness and determination on my part would succeed?"

"Yes, Sire; I am persuaded of it. You have been the kind, indulgent father long enough; appear as the master, and profound silence will succeed the clamours which have wounded your Royal ear."

"Upon my word," cried the King, rubbing his hands, "I have a great inclination to follow your advice: I do not see what I can do better."

Just at this critical moment fortune brought both the Chancellor and the Duc d'Aiguillon to my apartments.

"Gentlemen," said the King, in answer to their pro-

found salutation, "I have been conferring with my excellent friend here, and she has proposed to me some very decided measures, nothing less than to wage open war with the Parliaments of Paris, and to destroy, by the sole act of my will, the consequences they are pleased to provide for the termination of your affair, M^r d'Aiguillon

"Sire, replied the Duke, "it would indeed be an act worthy of your Royal interference to relieve me from a state of embarrassment which, I may presume your Majesty is now convinced I should never have been placed in but for my steady observance of your Royal commands

"Deign, Sire, added M^r de Maupeou, "to preserve these praiseworthy intentions The malice of the Parliaments, unless put a stop to by Your Majesty, is greatly to be feared

"Well, then, said the King, "if it must be so, summon a general assembly at Versailles for the day after to morrow

"And why, may it please Your Majesty, should it be at Versailles? enquired the Chancellor "It is, on the one hand displaying a species of weakness to summon the magistry to meet you here, while, on the other, it is affording the people a fair opportunity of exclaiming against this violation of their usual forms Do better than this leave this place without apprising any person, and appear at Paris whilst you are wholly unexpected Your unlooked for presence will strike terror into every heart

This advice met with my entire approbation, as well as that of the Duc d'Aiguillon It appeared the only method of avoiding the united resistance of the opposite party of preventing Paris from being inundated with pamphlets in prose and verse and of encouraging the timid or emboldening the courageous The King likewise approved this counsel, and it was therefore agreed that it should be kept secret till the next day only, and that at the breaking up of the Council the members should be apprised of it

The following day was Saturday When the Council had terminated, the King, who had quitted the room hastily, returned "Gentlemen, said he, "I was about to

leave you, forgetting that I had not announced to you my intentions for the morrow. The Parliament has exhausted my patience; it does not think proper to bring the business relative to the Duc d'Aiguillon to a conclusion; I shall, therefore, take it into my own hands. Early to-morrow I shall present myself in my own person at the Palace, and I flatter myself I shall bring the Parliament to a proper sense of its duty."

At this intimation the Duc de Choiseul became pale as death; he saw in his exclusion from the Privy Council in which these measures had been resolved the rapid diminution of his credit; whilst, at the same time, he feared that if the King thought fit to take him with him to Paris, it would embroil him with the magistracy. Nevertheless, advancing towards the King, and repressing his profound emotion, he said:

"Is my presence necessary to Your Majesty?"

"No, my lord Duke," replied the King; "this is an affair which comes only within the jurisdiction of my Chancellor."

"In that case, Sire, as I had proposed going to-morrow to La Ferté, to pass some days there with M. Delaborde, if you will deign to permit me, I will accomplish this journey."

"Take your pleasure in whatever way seems best to you, my lord," replied the King; "and I wish you all possible enjoyment." Saying which, Louis XV. bowed to M. de Choiseul and quitted the room.

The other members of the Council, to whom all these things were quite new, regarded each other with an enquiring eye. M. d'Aiguillon bore this scrutiny with a calm and steady countenance, and the Chancellor alone could have supposed him better acquainted with what had just transpired than the rest of the assembly.

We learned for a certainty that about eleven o'clock on the same evening a servant of M. de Choiseul was despatched to Paris, bearing to various members of Parliament the confidential intimation of what was to take place on the following day. There evidently existed between this minister and the

magistracy & guilty connivance wholly incompatible with the interests of His Majesty

The King having returned to my apartments, sent to desire the attendance of the captain of the guards then upon duty. This officer, I think, was M de Villeroi, but I am not sure of the circumstance, and I cannot now spare time to ascertain the fact. However this may be, the King issued the necessary orders for his regiment to be in readiness to march on the following day. Companies were placed along the road and in the squares of Paris, in order that, in case of any disturbance, they might be ready to quell the least appearance of a tumult. When we were alone the King said to me

"To-morrow will see me not merely the nominal, but the real master of France. hitherto I have shared my crown with my Parliaments, but it is time I should vindicate my reign alone

"For Heaven's sake, Sire, cried I, "expose not your sacred person to any danger, think how necessary you are to our safety and happiness

"I fear not, my dear Countess, replied Louis. "I trust we have no Dimiens to dread

"No, Sire. I fear not your encountering an assassin amongst the long robes. I rather dread the violence of an enraged multitude

"In that case, madam, I must commit myself to the care of Providence. It would ill become the descendant of Henry IV to play the coward. I know that my life belongs to the first villain who has sufficient resolution to deprive me of it. but that shall not prevent my going whither honour calls me

The King had just finished speaking when MM de Soubise, de Broghe, and d'Aiguillon entered the room

"Come, gentlemen, said the King, "come and encourage a Frenchwoman whose fears for my life induce her to dread my endangering it by attending the Parliament to-morrow

"Sire, replied the Prince de Soubise. "I will answer for your safety with my life

“And I, Sire,” exclaimed the Duc d’Aiguillon, “will forfeit my existence if Your Majesty incurs the least danger.”

“There can be no danger for me,” said the King, “in the midst of my people ; but there is a species of warfare I must prepare myself for : we shall have a shower of pamphlets, songs and epigrams. I shall not be spared any more than you, madam.”

“Oh ! as for me, Sire, I laugh at such things ! I have been too long used to them.”

In this and similar conversation we passed the eve of this memorable day.

CHAPTER VI

Note from the King to Madame du Barri—Particulars of the sitting of the Assembly of the 3rd of September 1770—Madame du Barri writes to the King—Louis XV pays her a visit—The Chancellor's opinion thereon—Conversation concluded—The Countess grants an audience to one of her old lovers—The manner in which she gets rid of him—The *C hoiseuls* make an unsuccessful attempt to introduce a relation of their own to the King in the hope of her supplanting Madame du Barri

THE King quitted me early, full of inquietude, for, in resuming the natural bravery of his character, he was yet distressed at thus openly attacking the discontented of his subjects. Nor was I much more tranquil myself, for, brought up, in common with all France, in an hereditary reverence for the Parliaments, I could not look upon the present position of affairs without trembling for the result, and already I saw myself implicated in the consequences, and held up as the object of general animadversion.

With a view to calm my impatience, I had enjoined Comte Jean to despatch couriers to me every quarter of an hour. Nevertheless, I strove with all my powers to maintain the King in his warlike disposition. His Majesty rose rather before his usual time, and sent his head valet to enquire how I had passed the night, as well as to convey to me the following note.

If you have any influence with Heaven pray for me. I am about to wage open war with these gentlemen of the long robe not that the necessary courage is wanting within me but I tremble at the apprehension that my subjects may not sufficiently comprehend my reasons for this grand stroke. But things cannot remain as they now are. A King who neither advances nor retires is lost. Adieu I embrace you.

I was deeply touched with this mark of feeling at a moment when matters of overwhelming interest might have been supposed to occupy the King's mind. The whole Court

was in a state of unusual excitement, for the peers, assembled during the night, had not preserved the same silence we had done; and the news of this energetic resolution on the part of Louis XV. was spread throughout Paris and Versailles, and everyone awaited with impatience the result of so important a proceeding.

Monday, the 3rd of September, 1770, at length arrived. At the break of day the various detachments of the King's guards took possession of the posts assigned to them; and their martial and imposing appearance was sufficient to inform every malcontent that they had the power as well as the will to repress all demonstrations of dissatisfaction.

Every member of Parliament, summoned at an early hour of the morning to attend an assembly extraordinary of the States-General, repaired with punctuality to the Palace; a great number of peers likewise attended, and never had a more solemn assembly been collected to discuss the affairs of a nation. After the prescribed ceremony Louis XV., having made the usual salutation to his Parliament by uncovering his head and bowing, contented himself with pronouncing these laconic words:

"Gentlemen, my Chancellor will explain to you my intentions." Upon which M. de Maupeou read aloud the following paper:

"GENTLEMEN,—His Majesty having informed you by a law framed in his presence that it was requisite to the sound exercise of his administration, as well as to the tranquillity of the province of Brittany, that the proceedings instituted against the Duc d'Aiguillon, a nobleman honoured with his confidence and charged with his commissions, should be entirely dropped, had expected that, in dutiful obedience to his wishes, all further prosecution of it would have been avoided.

"Nevertheless, on the 2nd of July last, acting upon an invalid information, you issued a decree, by which, without any previous instruction, any acquired proofs, and to the neglect and contempt of every judicial form and regulation, you attempt to deprive of the prerogatives of his rank a peer

of the realm, whose conduct has been declared irreproachable by your Sovereign himself

"This decree, which it was signified to you by your Master of the Rolls, at the express desire of His Majesty, had been abrogated by the Royal mandate was followed on your part by your decrees of the 11th of July and the 1st of August, by which it was manifest that you persisted in your decree of the 2nd of July

"The King has attentively listened to all your representations and perfectly recognises the spirit in which they are dictated

'You have multiplied your acts of disobedience to the will of His Majesty, and your example and principles have given rise to many even more unconstitutional acts in other departments, emanating from the pernicious precedent afforded by you

'With a view to recall you to the obedience due to your King, His Majesty once more explains his intentions and commands that all proceedings against the Duc d'Anguillon shall be consigned to oblivion

"His Majesty desires not only to destroy every trace of your past conduct but also to put it out of your power to disobey him for the future

"The King further commands that all the papers sent to the Parliament of Paris in consequence of the decrees of the Parliament of Brittany, of the 21st and 28th of March and of the 26th of July last the minutes and the whole particulars of the decree of the 7th of April which declares null and void the informations received from Brittany, the protest entered by M d'Anguillon those entered by M de la Chatois and one Audonard the minutes and sum of the information given at Paris the conclusions of the Attorney General the decrees of the 9th and 29th of May, and the 26th and 28th of June the two decrees of the 2nd of July the decree of the said day for the notification of the proceedings to M d'Anguillon, the decrees of the 11th and 31st of July the two decrees of the 1st of August, and those of the 3rd, 8th, 9th and 21st of last August, shall be given into his posses-

sion by the Masters of the Rolls and those who are now the depositaries of them."

Here the Chancellor interrupted his discourse by calling, in the name of the King, upon those who had charge of the papers in question to deliver them up. His call was obeyed; and when the whole of the memorials were placed in his hands, he again took His Majesty's orders and thus continued:

"The King commands that the above-mentioned acts and proceedings, arrests and decrees shall be expunged from your registers.

"His Majesty prohibits you from attempting to re-establish in your records, either by copies or notes, should any be in existence, any more than by verbal process, the recollection of the contents of the said acts, writings and proceedings, or by perpetuating their purport in any other manner whatsoever.

"His Majesty commands his First President, as well as every other president or officer, under pain of his severe displeasure, to dissolve every meeting or assembly in which it shall be proposed to re-establish, either wholly or in part, the acts, writings and proceedings now suppressed. You are likewise forbidden, under the same penalty, to be present at any deliberations which may be held in spite of the King's prohibition, or to affix your signature to any *procès verbal* respecting them.

"With regard to your representations, His Majesty has seen with astonishment that you have attempted to establish a resemblance between the events of his reign and those unfortunate occurrences which ought to be effaced from the mind and memory of every true and loyal Frenchman, and in which his Parliament played a too conspicuous part. His Majesty is willing to believe that, in the present instance, you have erred through imprudence only.

"His Majesty persists in his reply respecting his prohibitions to the princes and peers; and, although you are not deemed to be acquainted with what is passing in Brittany, His Majesty deigns to inform you that he will never permit those proceedings to be renewed which he, in his wisdom and

desire for the public good, has thought proper to suppress, that the two magistrates were arrested because their conduct was offensive to His Majesty, and he warns you that those who conduct themselves in a similar manner will receive similar proofs of his resentment.

"His Majesty forbids you, under pain of his heaviest displeasure, from holding any discussion respecting these matters

"You are most especially prohibited from meddling with matters which do not come within your jurisdiction

"His Majesty apprises you that he shall look upon any correspondence with the other Parliaments as a criminal confederation against his person and authority.

"His Majesty further enjoins his First President, or any other president or officer who shall preside in his absence, to dissolve every meeting in which any proposition may be made tending to discuss matters respecting which the most perfect silence is commanded, as well as touching any ambassador who may be sent you from the other Parliaments "

The Chancellor here terminated this vigorous protestation, from which we all anticipated the happiest results. In the Beds of Justice none but the Sovereign, or his delegates, had the power of speaking, the Parliament therefore listened in profound silence. However much it might be internally resolving not to obey the King's pleasure, its obedience in effect was merely momentary and apparent, and allowed it time to prepare at leisure the opposition it did not think proper to display till after the recess, and its best policy was to lean entirely to the side of the Chancellor when he expressed his intention of preventing the meeting of the States General.

Those who had dreaded the fury of the populace were not mistaken. Scarcely were the particulars of this meeting known, than the Court, the city, the whole of France, became in a state of violent excitement, of which an adequate idea can scarcely be formed. A universal clamour arose against the Duc d'Anguillon, the Chancellor, and even the king, and, as you may readily suppose, I was not spared in the business. I received from different parts of the kingdom more than two hundred anonymous letters, in which I was threatened with

every disgrace, as well as humiliating punishment. The cabal against me was much strengthened by the hatred which this measure excited in the minds of those who had hitherto only regarded me with indifference; and I can truly say that the grief it occasioned me was the greatest I have ever experienced in the whole course of my life.

It was, however, important that I should conceal my uneasiness from the King; and it became no easy task to me to wear the semblance of gaiety and confidence whilst my heart was distracted with all that was going on. I saw the different members of my party the mark of the malignity of public opinion, whilst my enemies were loaded with the most flattering epithets and favours. The conduct of the Duc de Choiseul was universally admired, and eulogised, and his not having accompanied the King to the Bed of Justice was praised to the skies, as proving how nobly this nobleman had protested against that disastrous measure: he was everywhere styled the friend and supporter of the laws of the land and the defender and champion of Parliaments.

In my despair at thus seeing the chances turn so entirely in the favour of this minister, I vowed his ruin, and I busied myself in the fulfilment of my oath with a bitter and revengeful feeling of which I could not have believed myself capable. I was still further excited thereto by the return of the Duchesse de Grammont, who was received in triumph at Court, where everyone crowded around her to offer the most joyful welcome, and to assure her she had not been forgotten during her absence. However, her vain boasting, and the parade she made of her haughtiness and hatred to me, contributed not a little to the success of my projects, the particulars of which I shall hereafter relate. I will now resume my account of what passed during and after the holding the Bed of Justice.

Whilst it was being held I continued in the most cruel alarms, although (in compliance with the desire I had expressed) couriers were sent off from Paris to Lucienne, where I had been since the morning, every quarter of an hour, alternately from Comte Jean du Barri, the Prince de Soubise

and the Duc de Fresnay M. d'Aiguillon and his wife, a lady of great merit, who had just begun to honour me with her friendship, came to mingle their uneasiness with mine. At length a courier came to inform me that the assembly was over, and that the King was on his road homewards. I lost no time in addressing the following words to His Majesty

SIRE — You are now truly the master of these factious men. Heroes have ever sought repose after victory let me pray of you to take yours with me and repay me by your presence for the cruel and tormenting anxiety I have undergone during the whole of the day

This note enchanted him, at least so I heard from the Duc de Tresmes, whom he sent to inform me he should come to dine with me, requesting I would signify to the Duc d'Aiguillon that he would be admitted to the table. Immediately the King appeared, I ran to him, and embraced him with transport

“Oh, how miserable have you made me,” I cried, “ever since you quitted Versailles !”

“Why, you little simpleton,” returned he, “did you imagine I ran the slightest danger? Everything has gone on smoothly I have struck a death-blow to those clamorous gentlemen, and I trust they will now remain tranquil Besides, it will be folly to attempt any resistance to my wishes, for I am resolved to proceed to the last extremity, and we shall see, in the course of the struggle, which of us shall be conqueror”

These words explained to me how deeply the King was exasperated at the conduct of his Parliament He was one of those characters easily irritated by resistance, who, reluctant at first to outstep the bounds of moderation, proceed rapidly, when once the Rubicon is passed, to deeds of the highest daring

His Majesty continued “And all this I shall easily accomplish with a Chancellor possessing the firmness of M. de Maupeou, who cares little for the antiquity of Parliaments, and is still less disposed to respect them

These sentiments, so favourable to the Chancellor, were

not calculated to give general satisfaction to all who heard them, for there are few at Court who can listen with pleasure to the expression of the Sovereign's open commendation of the conduct of a minister, and they ill brook the concentration of the Royal favour upon one individual. However, upon these occasions the courtiers are careful to conceal their real sentiments, and, according to the established custom of Courts, are unanimous in applauding the King's just discrimination, and with well-feigned admiration echo back their master's words. Louis XV. further added that while the Chancellor was reading his speech to the Parliament he had been much amused by observing the different countenances of the members, the greater part of whom appeared animated by a rage and audacity they took little pains to conceal. "In fact," said he, "a thought then struck me which had not previously occurred to me. I said to myself that mere opportunity alone was wanting to revive the Fronde in France. The germs of revolt are plentifully scattered abroad, and rebels would not be wanting ready to second the treasonable actions of any daring leader."

No person replied to this observation, either to blame or applaud; and the dead silence which ensued produced such an effect on the mind of the King that he remained more convinced than ever of the truth of what he had advanced; and from this moment he received with greater facility the unfavourable impressions we sought from time to time to give him of the Parliaments.

The Chancellor did not join us till a late hour. After the Bed of Justice he was compelled to take the necessary measures for preventing any bad consequences from the stroke of policy which had just been acted. The King received him in the most flattering manner, and repeated in his presence the complimentary things he had said in his absence. "Sire," replied M. de Maupeou, "in accepting the high office and dignity with which Your Majesty has deigned to invest me, I became your servant and not that of the Parliament. So long as it remains faithful to you I will never by any means seek to irritate you against it; but, should it

and the profound passion with which, many years ago, you inspired me—a passion which I had the happiness to believe was reciprocal.”

He had now said too much for me to allow of his saying more.

“Sir!” I exclaimed, with the most natural surprise, “do you know where you are, and to whom you speak? If your intellect be deranged, I pity you, but if in the possession of your senses, I must command your silence.”

My cool and determined manner seemed to confuse him, but, taking fresh courage

“How, madam,” he cried, “not recollect me! Yet——”

“Sir,” I replied, “I repeat I do not comprehend one word of your conversation, and am utterly at a loss to know to what you allude. If you are labouring under any mistake, it is out of my power to clear your bewildered imagination, but I would advise you to retire, and, as my time is precious, I trust you will pardon me if I do not lose it further in idle and unmeaning talk. Your most obedient servant, sir”

At these words I curtsied to him, and, pulling my bell, gave the signal for the admission of a fresh candidate. The Marquis d'Aubuisson, thunderstruck at his reception, quitted the room without clearly understanding whether I had spoken seriously or in jest. I have since learned that, surprised at a reception so ill agreeing with the favourable opinion he entertained of his amiable self, he maintained a profound silence respecting this interview, and I congratulated myself upon having taken the very best method of freeing myself from his importunities. In my difficult and delicate situation, had I adopted any other means, I might have compromised my safety, for I well knew the presumption of the Marquis, and how capable he was of injuring me by his noisy gasconading, which my brother-in-law had particularly cautioned me to mistrust.

It was about the commencement of this year that the Choisculs, who had formerly inveighed so bitterly against

the disgraceful situation of being mistress to the King, made a powerful effort to supplant me in the affections of Louis XV. The Comte de Choiseul, son of the Marquis, had espoused a young and beautiful Creole, Mademoiselle de Rubi, whose all-surpassing loveliness was expected to eclipse the whole Court. She was rumoured to be the most perfect beauty that had ever appeared, and her relations built the greatest hopes upon the sensation she would produce. She was duly instructed in the part she should play; and so seductive was her whole appearance, and so impossible did it seem to her partial friends to resist such a blaze of female attractions, that they thought it more than probable that, once seen by the Royal eye, her success with him was certain. I own that I had many serious alarms on the subject myself, when one day the Maréchale de Mirepoix said to me, with her accustomed good humour:

"Well, my fair Countess, so you have a rival in training! The modest and virtuous Choiseuls are dying with envy to step into your shoes. Have a care of them; they are a deep set, who, to win their way to heaven, would give their mothers, sisters or wives for mistresses to the Father, Son or Holy Ghost! I am sadly afraid, not of their succeeding in their plot, but of their filling your mind with alarm."

I replied, with some haughtiness, that I had no fears for myself. But this assertion did not indeed prove the fact, for I found it impossible to rest till I had informed the King of it, who, shrugging up his shoulders, replied, "I know all their schemes, and the hopes formed upon them. But fear not—you run no danger whilst I see Madame de Grammont behind the curtain. Were I to accept a mistress from her hand, she would wish to govern all France; and her insatiable ambition would convert the temple of love into an office for intrigue."

The King kept his word with me. The haughty beauty was brought to Versailles to exhibit her graces and sylph-like form. Louis XV. saluted her with politeness, addressed to her many courteous expressions, but never once looked at her, or seemed aware of her bewitching presence. The eyes

of more than two hundred persons were intently watching the effect she would produce on the King; but he appeared wholly preoccupied and inattentive to all that was going on. This indifference overthrew vast projects, and renewed the *fury of the cabal against me*. From that moment I was looked upon as the most immoral woman—a highly dangerous one I evidently was, since so fascinating a rival had been unable to supplant me. The conduct of the King upon this occasion perfectly delighted me, proving how entirely I was the sovereign mistress of his heart. I felt assured that I had indeed succeeded the Marchioness de Pompadour; and the King of Prussia, according to his manner of calculating, and his original mode of expression, could not from henceforth refuse to acknowledge me for Petticoat No. 3.

CHAPTER VII

Chagrin of the Duc de Choiseul at the credit and influence of Madame du Barri—The King commissions the Countess to draw out the list of persons who shall attend him to Chantilly—*Pater noster* of the period—The Bishop of Orleans—Grand fête given by M. Bertin—Gallantries of M. de Jarente—The King's opinion of this Bishop—Madame du Barri seeks the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul—Indiscreet behaviour of the latter at the review at Fontainebleau—Adventure of Mademoiselle Béye with three noblemen of the Court—Doctors Senac, Bordeu and Quesnay.

THE Duchesse de Grammont had so well taken her measures that her exile had been generally considered as a mere journey of pleasure and recreation. She returned, notwithstanding, equally incensed against me. Convinced that she had been sacrificed to my superior influence, her desire of vengeance and her bursts of rage contributed not a little to accelerate the downfall of the Duke her brother, and well bore out the Chancellor's assertion that the presence of this lady would only tend to advance our interests; in fact, she only showed herself at Versailles, Compiègne and Fontainebleau to proclaim her grievances, and to enlarge upon the King's folly in elevating me to an eminence from which I employed myself in projecting the degradation and ruin of the high magistracy of France. In this manner she continued sowing the seeds of rebellion in the minds of rich and poor, till she became daily more and more dangerous to the throne.

The Duc de Choiseul, her brother, required no incitement on her part to redouble his hatred against me from the moment that he had seen, by my manner of receiving him when he came to return me his thanks for his sister's recall, that all chance of an accommodation between us was

impossible. He was not ignorant either that I was intently occupied in bringing about his disgrace, and well he perceived that my success was no longer doubtful. You will easily suppose that with these feelings he would not have nominated, of his own accord the Comte d'Harcourt second colonel of the Corsican Legion and that a superior power to his own must have been concerned in effecting this favour. The truth was, the king had positively commanded the presentation of the commission to M d'Harcourt and M de Choiseul unable to bear even this annoying proof of my entire influence with His Majesty, presumed to make some observation upon the subject.

Sir answered Louis XV, sternly, 'I elevate whomsoever I think proper, and render no account to my servants of either my will or my affections.'

The sarcastic bitterness of this reply struck the minister speechless. From that moment the king entirely ceased all conversation with him, except during the Council and meetings upon affairs of the State. This was indeed a precursory symptom of his approaching downfall—a fact which was easily read in the diminution of those flattering attentions the Duke and all his family had been accustomed to receive from the Court in general and principally during the king's journeys upon pleasure or business.

I was less in object of universal homage at Versailles than elsewhere, on account of the Royal Princesses who held their Court there but at Compiègne Fontainebleau and all the king's residences whither I went alone, I received the highest honours. My society was sought with the most flattering eagerness, and those who were disagreeable to me remained in the utmost neglect and solitude. It was upon the occasion of one of these excursions that I deeply mortified the Duc de Choiseul. Just before we set out the king said to me

Is it not very vexatious to find only weariness and distaste where we had hoped for nothing but pleasure and amusement? Yet this is most commonly the case in all the excursions I take with a view to recreation.

"And do you not know the cause, Sire?" asked I. "It proceeds from the persons by whom you are surrounded. You permit the attendance of those who are not honoured with your friendship and regard, and their presence alone is sufficient to repress the joyous feelings which would prevail were they away."

"I believe you are right," replied Louis XV.; "but when the list is brought me, a thousand considerations of great or secondary importance prevent me from striking out certain names, and nearly always I have reason to be dissatisfied with the manner in which I let the arrangements be made. We are going to Chantilly. Well, I will have nothing to do with the list this time; I leave it to you to make out as you please."

I did not (as you may suppose) refuse so gratifying a mark of confidence, and I profited by it to keep back all those who had afforded me any cause for complaint; nor did I except the Duc de Choiseul. When it was completed I presented it to the King.

"I do not wish to see it," replied he.

"But, Sire, if I have omitted certain names?"

"So much the worse for them," cried he; "they must wait till the next opportunity for repairing the omission."

I clearly perceived that the King comprehended me, and fully understood that the list contained neither the name of his Prime Minister, nor that of the insignificant Duc de Praslin. I leave you to judge the consternation of the Choiseul family, when they received no commands from His Majesty to follow him to Chantilly.

To complete my happiness, the King passed his time very happily; for I exerted myself most indefatigably to prevent his regretting any who were absent, and I can affirm that he never could have found one languid, tedious hour in which to desire their presence. They were not so forgetful of us, however. Furious at my having banished them from participating in the Royal pleasures, they redoubled their invectives and calumnies against me; and this period, in which the quarrels with the Parliaments

were first commenced, was the season in which insults of every species were most unsparingly heaped upon me

Amongst the many satirical productions levelled at me there was one which was not impregnated with that deadly venom in which the pens of all who wrote at my expense were dipped it was a parody upon "The Lord's Prayer" Had my enemies contented themselves with this mode of attacking me I could easily have pardoned them, but, unfortunately, hatred knows no moderation, and, in its dread of not reaching the mark, overshoots it The determined malignity and perseverance of those who sought to injure me, made me resolve no longer to keep terms with them The most contemptible and inveterate was M de Jarente, Bishop of Orleans and Minister of Benefices

He had at first been on my side, imagining, no doubt, that as a bad priest and a rake he would have easily purchased my goodwill and that I should gladly submit myself to his guidance I saw him crouching before me at the commencement of my good fortune, and I looked upon his conduct as the more surprising from the fact of his being in the pay of the Choiseuls, whose tool and creature he entirely was

Notwithstanding the disorders of his ecclesiastical life M de Jarente possessed much sense as well as tact He soon perceived that he could make nothing of me, and immediately, with all the skill of the most experienced general he made a sudden wheel about, and returned to the camp of the enemy which he had only quitted by stealth, and possibly with the consent of the Choiseuls From that moment he afforded me a thousand cruises of complaint and he was one of those persons whom I was perpetually pointing out to the king as undeserving of his regard

Whilst these things were going on, the brother of one of our ministers, M Bertin, treasurer *des finances casuelles*, a man of much wit, and a *bon vivant* gave, at his country

† This parody we abstain from giving as downright blasphemy —
FRANK

house at Passy, a most magnificent fête, but as remarkable for the scandal of its proceedings as for its brilliancy. He had assembled all the principal heads of the clergy: M. d'Orleans, the Archbishops of Arles and Toulouse, the Bishops of Montpellier, Contances, Dijon, Soissons, Chartres, and others, all much fonder of the luxuries of a well-filled dinner-table than of discharging the duties of their vocation. There were likewise present at this entertainment the Duc de la Vrillière, another friend to every species of debauchery: the Abbé Terray, Comptroller-General of the Finances; M. d'Aligre, First President of the Parliament of Paris; the two brothers of the master of the house, the minister and the abbé; some lords of the Court, the Ducs de la Trémouille and de Tresmes, the Prince de Soubise, &c. —in a word, it was a complete assemblage of libertines of the first class.

The amusements of the evening were in harmony with the taste of the guests: exquisite fare, the rarest wines; women whose beauty was equal to the ease with which they threw off the usual forms of modest reserve, were there in profusion. Madame Bertin, with infinite grace, did the honours of her house. Conveniently blind to all that she was not required to see, and equally skilful in the application of her ears, she heard nothing that her guests were desirous should escape her notice, although, in reality, not the slightest word, look or gesture was lost upon her.

The fête was terminated by the representation of *There's Truth in Wine*, a comedy by Collé, written in a very amusing style, but flavoured with a lasciviousness of expression little fitting the chaste ears of the reverend fathers of the Church. Those present, however, did not lose any part of the rich treat; laughed excessively, and retired delighted with all the enjoyments of the evening. The guests might have supposed themselves assisting at the Saturnalia of the middle ages, when they elected a pope from among lunatics and a bishop from idiots.

The ecclesiastic most distinguished by the license of his manners was the Bishop of Orleans, who made his court with a

truly apostolic zeal to a Madame de Blercourt who was present. She was one of those half virtuous characters who are guided only by what people will say of them, and cast off their lovers as easily as their old gloves. She had first run through her own fortune, then that of many others, and since the attainment of her sixth lustre had directed all her manœuvres against the riches of the clergy. So successful had she been that she had already ruined two bishops four or five grand vicars, and was now laying siege to the Minister of Church Benefices.

M. de Jarente was certainly not unprovided with female friends. For, besides a fair relation who constantly resided with him, he kept four or five ladies in a sort of secondary capacity, but this seraglio was far from satisfying one of so rapacious an appetite, and he easily fell into the snare laid for him by the crafty Madame de Blercourt. Captivated by her honeyed words and inviting looks, the love stricken prelate entreated permission to conduct her home, the lady consented, and M. de Jarente did not quit his new acquaintance till an advanced hour on the following day.

I learned all these details almost immediately after the fête. I had entreated M. de Sartines to send his agents to the festive scene, in order that I might furnish myself with a store of anecdotes resulting from the evening's amusement with which to divert the king. I was not a little pleased to hear the account of M. de Jarente's peccadilloes, and lost no time in apprising his Royal master of the fact, for, free as he was in his own notions he did not like the idea of the clergy disgracing their calling. There was in the heart of Louis XV. a religious feeling, which compelled him to disapprove of such irregularities, and he had for some time past severely reproached himself for allowing the guardianship of Church benefices to be lodged in the hands of so unworthy a prelate.

During my recital the king frequently expressed his displeasure.

"What a distressing thing," said he, "is the conduct of our clergy—their immense riches and unbounded influence

at Court have been their destruction; an entire reform is absolutely requisite, and the State would find such a measure most salutary. As for the Bishop of Orleans, he is a wretch who disgraces the religion he professes; and I should be unable to satisfy my conscience were I to leave him longer in the post he occupies. Let the new year come round, and he shall resign his diocese to worthier hands."

"You should, Sire," I replied, "follow up his dismissal by that of other ministers who serve you even worse than he does. Your Choiseul and your Praslin are insupportable to me, and no longer necessary to you."

"So you think, you little brainless adviser," exclaimed Louis, smiling; "but you are mistaken—more particularly with regard to the former. He is possessed of all the secrets of the State, and to him we are indebted for the family compact which is so greatly to our interest and of which Spain bears the heaviest burden. He is a favourite with all the European Powers—in fact, were I to dismiss him it would be long ere I met with a man of equal talent to set up in his place."

These sentiments from the King's lips displeased me much. It showed me how near his heart De Choiseul still held a place, and how much diligence and perseverance would be required ere his downfall could be effected. On the other hand, I feared to reveal my schemes too plainly by pointing out the Duc d'Aiguillon as a man equally capable, in my opinion, of holding the helm of affairs. I therefore contented myself with shrugging up my shoulders and exclaiming in a piteous tone:

"Lord deliver us from De Choiseul and De Praslin!"

"Enough, enough!" cried the King, impatiently. "This is ill-timed. I am glad to oblige you in everything reasonable, but I cannot do so at the expense of my kingdom."

"Ah, Sire," said I, "do you not consider that your Chancellor possesses sufficient ability? In my opinion he is both clever and decided in his measures."

"Yes, yes; he is well enough for one of the long robe, but he would make an awkward figure in a full Court suit,

with a sword by his side As King of France, I love to be surrounded by persons of rank and quality, but I should fall in the estimation of all Europe were I to confide the direction of my affairs to an obscure individual like M. de Maupeou.'

"Then, Sire," cried I, "you reverse the proverb; and with you it is the gown which makes the monk."

Our conversation finished here, because visitors were announced, and we neither of us wished to discuss the subject before witnesses I was not slow in communicating what had passed to the Duc d'Aiguillon, who urged me more than ever to combat the influence possessed by the Duc de Choiseul over the mind of his Royal master.

A short time after this we set out for Fontainebleau, for the purpose of affording Louis his favourite amusement of hunting there This noble mansion is, in my opinion, from the beauty of its situation, far superior to Versailles I foresaw that this journey would, in some measure, decide the fate of the minister, and that it would, besides, be much more easy for me to wage war against him. The thing became so much the more readily accomplished by the Duke's commission of many imprudences, which drew down even the severe animadversion of the king himself.

He did me the favour to commit his first act of folly on my account when the king reviewed the regiment called his own By virtue of his office, the charge of doing the honours of the day to the monarch devolved on M. de Choiseul He had most pompously announced his intention of so doing, but then he was under the expectation of the Dauphiness being present at the ceremony A caprice on the part of this Princess, whose real motives I will presently explain, deranged all his plans, and I was installed in her place at the review, to which I went, having for my ladies of honour the Duchesse de Valentinois Grimaldi and the Marquise de Montmorency. The king's manner towards me decided that of every other person, and I received the usual military honours dictated by gallantry under similar circumstances M. de Châtelet,

second colonel, conducted himself most handsomely towards me, and left me no reason to feel the slightest dissatisfaction. In the evening he gave a superb supper under an immense tent pitched in the forest, and everything conspired to show that I was sole mistress of the banquet.

What had become of M. de Choiseul all this time? Early apprised that the Dauphiness would not quit her apartment on that day, he could not endure to contribute to my triumph; and, in consequence, sent to inform the King that a violent colic confined him to his house and would prevent his following His Majesty to the review. Louis XV. came to me, saying:

"The Duc de Choiseul will not be at the review; he is seriously indisposed with the colic."

"Yes, Sire," cried I, "he, no doubt, has severe pain, but it is in his heart, and he keeps away to avoid seeing me honourably treated at the review."

"If this be true," answered Louis, thoughtfully, "his conduct is inexcusable."

"Your Majesty may be assured it is as I say," replied I, "and yet you would have me love such a man."

"Love him, no! but endure him."

"Ah, Sire, I have not your patience."

"I ought indeed to possess a tolerably large portion to put up with certain whims and caprices."

Louis XV. stopped himself there. You can scarcely judge, my friend, how fatal this impolitic action proved to the minister. The King was piqued at it, and imagined himself personally aggrieved by the Duke absenting himself from the review and the supper which followed it. This idea gained so much ground in his estimation, that it was henceforward much more easy for me to injure the minister in the mind of the King, and to persuade him to dismiss him, than it had ever been before.

During our stay at Fontainebleau we were much amused at the wrath of the Princesse de Brionne against an operadancer named Mademoiselle de Béye, a very pretty creature, fit for the personification of a pagan nymph, if only for the

accuracy with which she fulfilled every particular of mythological gallantry. She held at this moment in her chains three illustrious lovers, whom she effectually blinded by her artful blindishments to a sense of her unfaithful conduct. The Marquis de Lincourt and the Princes de Guéméné and de Lambesc were the knight errants who offered themselves as sacrifices upon the altar of this craving and perfidious Darude. Instead, however, of waging eternal war till one should obtain exclusive right to the fair, they judged it more wisely done to share her smiles between them. This mutual complaisance may appear to you as passing the bounds of probability—but remember the thing happened at Court, and in that artificial region events that common sense would refuse to credit are deemed natural enough.

The Prince de Guéméné, as though he had taken leave of his senses, seemed determined to anticipate the crisis which his tottering fortunes threatened by lavishing every species of luxury and extravagance upon Mademoiselle de Beye, in the hope thereby to surpass his rivals in her estimation. His gifts to her were heaped in a profusion scarcely ever heard of—he once presented her with the entire furniture of a sleeping room in porcelain—bed, drawers, secretaire, chiffonnier, night table, chimney ornaments, timepiece, with a crowd of lesser articles, which together amounted to the sum of one hundred thousand crowns. The whole was exhibited as a curiosity at the house of the cabinet maker who had provided so curious and costly a service. This prodigality at first disgusted the King, but yet it is very possible that to it I was indebted for the famous toilet service of gold which His Majesty bestowed on me from time to time by single pieces.

Less dissipated, and much more amiable, the Prince de Lambesc was a greater favourite with the sprightly dancer; and his natural parsimony suffered not a little from the sums it cost him to make an adequate return for this preference. The Comtesse de Brionne, his mother, perceiving with regret how much the health and morals of her son were affected by such a connection, caused Mademoiselle de Beye to be pro-

hibited from accompanying him to Fontainebleau, hoping, by her absence and the efforts of her friends, to wean her misguided son from so degrading a passion: but the wily actress, feigning to receive with deference the orders of the Princess, waited only till the Court had set out before she was on the road to rejoin her protectors, to whose power and influence she trusted to screen herself from the effects of Madame de Brionne's anger.

Unfortunately for her friends, she arrived under very unfavourable circumstances. She had a privileged lover, a journeyman, and this low affair being discovered, she was disgraced and confined in the hospital.

We were now approaching the close of the year, and about this period died M. Senac, first physician to the King: he was a man of extensive capacity, excellent sense, lively passions, and implacable in his hatred of all those who offended him. His fondness for boasting was very amusing: he did not himself believe in the power of medicine, although he practised it with great success. He was sincerely attached to the King, who had a severe loss in him. He is said to have been a Protestant minister in his youth, and owed his good fortune to the Maréchal de Saxe. He often related to me that, following this warrior one day near the trenches, he was seized with a mortal terror at finding himself within reach of the batteries of the besieged. The Marshal, perceiving his fright, told him that if he would pull up the windows (for the doctor was seated in the carriage) he would be quite safe. Senac, finding this shelter very doubtful, hastily scrambled out of the vehicle and went to conceal himself in a neighbouring ditch till the Marshal had finished reconnoitring.

I should have liked to put Borden in his place: he was a person of superior merit, and, moreover, my own physician; but here I experienced a difficulty that was insuperable. Next to Senac was Dr. Quesnay, first physician in ordinary to the King, who used to consult him, and had, from the time of Madame de Pompadour, reposed the utmost confidence in him. Quesnay was at the head of the sect

of Economists a great friend and partisan of philosophers, cool calm and reserved. Admitted formerly into the intimacy of Petticoat No 2, he could not bring himself to profess the same attachment for me. Unable to supersede him by placing Borden in the vacant place, I was compelled to rest satisfied with leaving things in the same state in which they were at the death of Senac and it is a fact that he had no successor till after the death of Quesnay, in 1774. This physician had transferred his affection for Madame de Pompadour to the Duc de Choiseul and joined the cabals of his party without being excited by any particular hatred towards me. It is true that the public in general regarded me as a *Jesuit* *et* *id* *fr* *ut* an imputation ridiculous enough but which had been clothed by my enemies in the garb of probability. Alas! this was not my real fault my greatest crime in the eyes of the philosophers was that I could not bend in humble submission before their protector and disciple M de Choiseul.

CHAPTER VIII

Madame du Barri succeeds in alienating Louis XV. from the Duc de Choiseul—Letter from Madame de Grammont—Louis XV.—The Chancellor and the Countess—Louis XV. and the Abbé de la Ville—The Maréchale de Mirepoix and Madame du Barri.

MATTERS now assumed an air of importance. My struggle with the Choiseuls had become a deadly warfare, which could only be terminated either by their downfall or my dismissal from Court. This latter measure was not very probable: an old man is not easily detached from a woman whom he loves; and each day only added to my ascendancy over the mind of the King. It is true that the same force of habit which enchained Louis XV. to me bound him likewise to M. de Choiseul. The idea of change terrified him, and so great was his dread of fresh faces that he would have preferred dying with his old minister to creating a younger one who might witness his end. Happily, the Duke himself brought on the crisis of his fate. His power was cramped on all sides, yet, resolved not to lay it down till the last extremity, he sought to stay his failing credit with the rising influence of the Dauphiness. His enemies were not slow in pointing out to the King his minister's frequent visits and great assiduities to a foreign princess, and enlarged upon the fatal effects this new alliance might produce to the monarchy.

Meanwhile the Chancellor, threatened by the Parliaments, saw only one way of averting the storm which was about to burst on his head. This was to introduce into the Cabinet persons entirely devoted to himself; but to accomplish his purpose it was necessary to exclude the Duc de Choiseul and his party. M. de Maupeou came to me in December, and, after having gently scolded me for what he termed my

carelessness, showed me a letter from the Duchesse de Grammont, which, he said, would wonderfully aid our plans. This letter was written to one of the presidents of the Parliament of Toulouse, M de — I cannot give you his name, for, although I have preserved the original of the letter, I have mislaid the envelope on which the address was written. I here give you a copy of this curious and important production.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT —I promised to give you the exact details of all that passed in this gay metropolis and it is with much pleasure I sit down to fulfil my engagement. Things go on much as usual or perhaps I should be speaking more correctly were I to say they are rapidly progressing from bad to worse. We have no longer a King in France all power is lodged in the hands of one sprung from the most infamous origin who in conjunction with others as intriguing as herself seeks only to ruin the kingdom and to degrade it in the eyes of other nations.

The noble firmness of the Sovereign Courts is odious to people of this class thus you may imagine the detestation in which they regard the candid and loyal conduct of the Duke. In the hope of procuring the dismissal of my brother they have chosen for his successor a wretch loaded with crimes a coward an extortioner a murderer—the Duc d'Aiguillon. As for you gentlemen who now constitute our Parliament your places will soon be filled by a magistracy drawn from the very dregs of society—a troop of slaves deaf and blind except to those who pay them best.

This is no time for indolent repose we must at once courageously and unanimously defeat the guilty schemes of our enemies. So long as my brother retains his present post he will support you with his best interest but should he be dismissed your business will soon be finished.

I beg my best remembrances—first to your excellent lady and after her to Madame B and Madame L not forgetting the Marquise de Chalret whose wit is truly Attic nor the Marquise de P—s who conceals beneath the graceful exterior of a Languedocian the soul of one of Corneille's Roman matrons. For yourself rely upon my warmest friendship and endeavours to serve you. My brother is most anxious to know you after the flattering manner in which I have mentioned you to him. When will you gratify us both by visiting Paris?—Ever yours

Nothing could have arrived more *à propos* for our purpose than this letter. I was still engaged in its perusal when the King was announced. I wished to hurry it back into the hands of M de Mrupeou, but he, more crafty than I, requested that I would keep it.

"It is fitting," he said, "that it should be seen by the right person."

Louis XV, astonished at the strange scene, inquired what it meant.

"A most shameful piece of scandal, Sire," I replied.

"An infamous epistle," added the Chancellor, "which one of my friends managed to abstract from the post-office and forward to me. I brought it to Madame la Comtesse that she might admire the determined malice of our enemies."

"You excite my curiosity," cried Louis XV. "Madam, have the kindness to allow me to see this paper."

"Indeed, Sire!" I exclaimed. "I know not whether I ought to obey Your Majesty, so entirely has the writer of the letter forgotten the respect due to your sacred person."

"Oh," said the King, "do not fear that. I am but too well used to the offence to feel astonishment at its occurrence."

I placed the paper in the hands of Louis XV., whose eye easily recognised the handwriting of Madame de Grammont. "Ah, ah!" cried he, "is it so? Let us see what this restless lady has to say of us all." I watched the countenance of the King as he read, and saw the frown that covered it grow darker and darker; nevertheless he continued to read on without comment till he had reached the end. Then, sitting down and looking full at the Chancellor, he exclaimed:

"Well, M. de Maupeou, and what do you think of this business?"

"I am overwhelmed with consternation, Sire," he replied, "when I think that one of Your Majesty's ministers should be able to conspire thus openly against you."

"Stay!" cried Louis, hastily, "that fact is by no means proved. The Duchesse de Grammont is a mad woman, who involves the safety of her brother. If I only believed him capable of such treachery he should sleep this night in the Bastille, and to-morrow the necessary proceedings should be commenced against him; as for his sister, I will take care of her within four good walls, and avenge myself for her past misconduct by putting it out of her power to injure me further."

"Sire," said I, in my turn, "remember she is a woman. I beseech you to pardon her, and let the weight of your just indignation fall upon her brother."

"Chancellor," cried the King, "this business must not be lightly passed over."

"Nor without due consideration," replied M. de Maupeou "Your Majesty may look upon this letter as the basis of a secret plot As for the Duchess, I am of my cousin's opinion despise her audacious attempts, but spare not her brother, he alone is the guilty as well as dangerous person."

The King made no answer, but rose, and crushing the letter in his hand, threw it from him

"Would," he exclaimed at last, "that the fiends had those who take such delight in disgusting me with my very existence! Heavens! how justly may I say I despise all men. Nor have I a much better opinion of your sex, Madame la Comtesse, I must warn you."

"Much obliged, Sir," I cried "Really I was not prepared for such gallantry It is rather hard that you should quarrel with me because this disagreeable Duchess behaves ill Upon my word, it is very pleasant!"

"Come, come," said Louis XV, kissing my cheek, "don't you be a naughty child If I had not you where should I turn for consolation amidst the torments by which I am surrounded? Shall I tell you? In the midst of all these perplexing affairs, there are moments in which I fear I may not be promoting the happiness of my people"

"Your Majesty is greatly mistaken," replied the Chancellor, "the nation in general must esteem themselves most happy under your reign, but it will always happen that ill disposed persons seek to pervert public opinion and to lead men's minds astray. The Duchess, when travelling, was the faithful and active agent of her brother. The Duke, to secure his stay in the Ministry, will eagerly avail himself of every adventitious aid, within your kingdom he seeks the aid of the Parliaments and philosophers, without, he claims the succour of Germany and Spain. Your Majesty is certainly master of your own will, and it would ill become me to point out the path you should tread, but my duty compels me to say that the Duc de Choiseul is the greatest enemy of the Royal House Of this he gave me a convincing

proof in the case of your august son, and now if he fancied he should find it more advantageous to have the Dauphin for his master——”

“Chancellor of France,” cried Louis, much agitated, “do you know what you are asserting?”

“The truth, Sire,” I exclaimed. “The public voice accuses the Duc de Choiseul of the death of your son. They declare——”

“How! you too, madam!” exclaimed the King, looking at me fixedly.

“And why not, Sire? I am merely repeating what is in everyone’s mouth.”

“I have heard this horrible charge before,” added the King. “The Jesuits informed me of it, but I could not give credit to such a monstrosity.”

“So much the worse,” I replied. “In the world in which we live we should always be on our guard.”

“Sire,” added the Chancellor, with the most diabolical address, “I am persuaded that M. de Choiseul is the most honourable man in the world, and that he would shudder at the bare idea of any attempt upon the life of Your Majesty; but his relations, friends and creatures believe that, supported by the Dauphiness, he would continue in office under your successor. Who can answer for their honour? Who can assure you that someone among them may not do that for the Duke which he would never venture to attempt himself? This is the personal danger Your Majesty runs so long as M. de Choiseul continues in office. Were he dismissed, the world would soon abandon the disgraced minister, and the Dauphiness be amongst the first to forget him.”

The King was pale with agitation, and for some minutes continued traversing the apartment with hasty strides. Then, suddenly stopping, “You are then convinced, M. de Maupeou,” he cried, “that the Duke is leagued with the Parliaments to weaken my authority?”

“There are palpable proofs to that effect,” replied the Chancellor. “Your Majesty may recollect the skilful manner in which, on the 3rd of September last, he avoided attending

you to Parliament. Most assuredly, had he not been the friend of rebels, he would not have shrunk from evincing by his presence how fully he shared your just indignation."

"That is but too true," cried Louis XV., "and I felt much annoyed at the time that he preferred going to amuse himself at the house of M. de Laborde when his duty summoned him to my side."

"Your Majesty cannot fail to perceive how everything condemns him his personal conduct, equally with that of his sister, proves how little he regards his Royal master's interest, and should your clemency resolve upon sparing him now, you may find your mercy produce fatal effects to yourself."

"His dismissal," resumed the King, "would disorganise all my political measures. Whom could I put in his place? I know no one capable of filling it."

"Your Majesty's wisdom must decide the point," replied the Chancellor. "My duty is to lay before you the true state of things. This I have done, and I know myself well enough not to intrude my counsel further. Nevertheless, I cannot help remarking that in Your Majesty's Court there are many as capable as M. de Choiseul of directing foreign affairs—M. d'Aiguillon, for example."

"Ah!" answered Louis XV., "this is not the moment, when M. d'Aiguillon is smarting from his severe contest with the long robes, to elevate him over the head of my hitherto esteemed minister."

M. de Maupeou and myself perceived that we should best serve our friend's cause by refraining from pressing the matter further, and we therefore changed the conversation. Nevertheless, as what had already passed had taken its full effect upon the King's mind, he suggested an idea which I should never have dreamed of recommending, and that was, to consult the Abbé de la Ville on the subject.

The Abbé de la Ville, head clerk of foreign affairs, was a man who, at the advanced age of fourscore years, preserved all the fire and vivacity of youth, he was acquainted with ministerial affairs even better than M. de Choiseul himself. Having formerly belonged to the Jesuits, to whom he was

entirely devoted, he had appeared to accelerate the period of their destruction; never had he been able to pardon his patron the frightful part he had compelled him to enact in the business. Years had not weakened his ancient rancour, and it might be said that he had clung to life with more than natural pertinacity, as though unwilling to lay it down till he had avenged himself on De Choiseul.

Louis XV. wrote to him, desiring he would avail himself of the first pretext that occurred to request an audience. This note was forwarded by a footman. The good Abbé easily divined that this mystery concealed some great design, and he therefore hastened to solicit an audience, as desired. When introduced into the cabinet of the King, His Majesty enquired at once:

“M. l'Abbé, can I depend upon your discretion?”

“Sire,” replied the Abbé, with a blunt frankness, “I am sorry Your Majesty can doubt it.”

“Be satisfied, sir,” replied the King, “I had no intention to offend you; but I wish to consult you upon a point, the importance of which you will fully appreciate. Answer me without disguise: do you believe that the services of the Duc de Choiseul are useful to my kingdom, and that my interests would suffer were I to dismiss him?”

“Sire,” replied M. de la Ville, without hesitation, “I protest to you, as a man of honour, that the presence of the Duc de Choiseul is by no means essential to the Ministry, and that Your Majesty's interests would sustain not the slightest injury by his absence.”

After this the Abbé de la Ville entered into particulars unnecessary to repeat here; it is sufficient to say that all he advanced materially aided our wishes. He afterwards reaped the reward of his friendly services, for when the Duc d'Aiguillon had displaced the Duc de Choiseul, he bestowed on M. de la Ville the title of *Director of Foreign Affairs*, an office created for him, and the bishopric *in partibus* of Tricomie. The good Abbé did not, however, long enjoy his honours, but ended his career in 1774.

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This conversation had been repeated to me; and, on my

side, I left no means untried of preventing Louis XV from placing further confidence in his minister, but, feeble and timid, he knew not on what to determine, contenting himself with treating the Duke coolly, and seeking, by continual rebuffs and denials to his slightest request, to compel him to demand that dismissal he had not the courage to give.

Whilst these things were in agitation, Madame de Mirepoix, who had been for some days absent from Versailles, came to call upon me. This lady possessed a considerable share of wit, and, although on the most intimate terms with me, had not altogether broken off with the De Choiseuls, to whom she was further bound on account of the Prince de Beauvau, her brother. It therefore excited in me no surprise when I heard that the De Choiseuls had called on her to ascertain whether it would not be possible, through her mediation, to come to some terms with me.

"And you must not be angry with me," continued she, "for undertaking the negotiation. I well foresaw all the difficulties, and entertained no hopes of its success, but, upon second thoughts, I considered it better I should accept the mission, for, in case of a negative being returned, it will be safe in my keeping and I will not add to the chagrin of a failure the shame of a defeat."

"It is my opinion," I replied, "that all propositions coming from these people should be rejected, they have compelled me to raise between them and myself an immense wall of hatred, not less difficult to surmount than the great wall of China."

'Yet,' replied the Marechale smiling, "they are disposed to pay any price for so doing."

"I have friends," I said, "from whom I can never separate myself."

"They are willing that your friends shall be theirs like wise," she cried, "for they perceive that M. de Maupeou, the Duc de la Vrilliere, and the Abbe Terray are provided for, and that the Duc d'Aiguillon alone remains to be suitably established. M. de Choiseul would be happy to aid him in obtaining the post of Minister of Naval Affairs."

"Well, and the Duchesse de Grammont," I enquired, "would she visit me?"

"Oh, as to that, I know nothing about it, and can venture no opinion; my commission does not extend so far."

"I understand you," I said. "She seeks for peace only as it would enable her the better to carry on her hostilities against me. I am sorry, Madame la Maréchale, that I cannot accept your terms for a reconciliation."

"Remember, I pray of you, that I have been an ambassadress, and nothing more," said Madame de Mirepoix. "Recollect I have spoken to you in the words of others, not my own. I must beg of you to be secret. If you divulge the particulars of this morning's conversation, it is I who will suffer by it. Your friends will be displeased with me for my interference; and I have no inclination to provoke the anger of a party so powerful as yours."

I promised the Maréchale to observe an inviolable secrecy, and so well have I kept my promise, that you are the first person to whom I ever breathed one syllable of the affair. I must own that it struck me as strange that the Duc de Choiseul should abandon his cousin, and consent to take his seat beside the Duc d'Aiguillon, whom he detested. Perhaps he only sought to deceive us all by gaining time till the death of the King. But what avails speculation upon the words and actions of a courtier, whose heart is an abyss too deep for one gleam of light to penetrate.

CHAPTER IX

Baron d Oigny Postmaster general—The King and the Countess read the opened letters—The disgrace of De Choiseul resolved upon—*Lettre de cachet*—Anecdote—Spectre of Philip II King of Spain—The Duc de Choiseul banished—Visits to Chanteloup—The Princesses—The Dauphin and Dauphiness—Candidates for the Ministry

THE interference of Madame de Mirepoix, originating as it did in the Duc de Choiseul, let me at once into the secret of his fears and the extent of my own power. The knowledge of the weakness of my adversary redoubled my energy, and from this moment I allowed no day to pass without forwarding the great work till I succeeded in effecting the Duke's ruin and securing my own triumph. The pamphleteers in the pay of my enemies, and those who merely copied these hirelings, assert, that every evening after supper, when Louis was intoxicated with wine and my seductions, I prevailed upon him to sign a *lettre de cachet* against his minister, which he immediately revoked when the break of day had restored to him his senses. This was a malicious falsehood. You shall hear the exact manner in which the *lettres de cachet* were signed.

On the evening of the 23rd of December, His Majesty having engaged to sup with me, I had invited M de Maupeou, the Duc de la Vrilliere and the Prince de Soubise. It appears that the King, previously to coming, had gone to visit the Dauphiness, he had not mentioned whither he was going, so that his attendants believed him to be in my apartments, and directed M d Oigny, Postmaster general, to seek him there. The Baron brought with him a packet of opened letters. When he saw me alone he wished to retire, for the servants, believing him to be one

of the expected guests, had ushered him in. However, I would not permit him to go until the King's arrival; and, half-spectively, half-seriously, I took from him his letters, protesting I would detain them as hostages for his obedience to my desires. At this moment Louis XV. entered the room, and M. d'Oligny, having briefly stated his business, bowed and departed. The Baron was a very excellent man, possessing an extensive and intelligent mind; he wrote very pleasing poetry, and had not his attention been occupied by the post he filled, he might have made a conspicuous figure in literature.

When we were left to ourselves, I said to the King.

"Now, then, for this interesting and amusing budget; for such, I doubt not, it will prove."

"Not so fast, madam, if you please," replied Louis XV. "Perhaps these papers may contain State secrets, unfit for your eye."

"Great secrets they must be," said I, laughing; "confided thus to the carelessness of the post."

So saying, I broke the seal of the envelope so hastily that the greater part of the letters and notes were scattered over the carpet.

"Well done!" cried the King.

"I entreat Your Majesty's pardon," said I; "but I will repair the mischief as far as I can."

I stooped to collect the fallen papers, and the King had the gallantry to assist me. We soon piled the various letters upon a tray and began eagerly to glance over their contents. My good fortune made me select from the mass those epistles addressed to the members of country Parliaments; they were filled with invectives against me, insulting mention of the King and praises of the Duc de Choiseul. I took especial care to read them in a loud and distinct voice.

"This really is not to be endured," cried Louis XV.; "that the mistaken zeal of these long-robed gentlemen should make them thus compliment my minister at my expense."

by any indiscretion reveal our secret, made a signal of impatience, to which I replied by shrugging my shoulders. Poor M de Soubise, although he did not comprehend my joke, laughed at it as heartily as the rest who saw its application. Oh! you courtier, I thought. We then entertained of him to commence the recital of his tale, which he did in the following words.

"There is in Lower Brittany a family gifted with a most singular endowment. Each member of the family, male or female, is warned exactly one month previous to his or her decease of the precise hour and day on which it will take place. A lady belonging to this peculiar race was visiting me rather more than a month since. We were conversing quietly together, when all at once she uttered a loud cry, rose from her seat, endeavoured to walk across the room, but fell senseless upon the floor. Much grieved and surprised at this scene, I hastily summoned my servants, who bestowed upon the unfortunate lady the utmost attention, but it was long ere she revived. I then tried to persuade her to take some rest. 'No,' she cried, rising and giving orders for her immediate departure, 'I have not sufficient time for rest. Scarcely will the short period between me and eternity allow me to set my affairs in order. Surprised at this language, I begged of her to explain herself. 'You are aware,' said she, 'of the fatal power possessed by my family—well, at the moment in which I was sitting beside you on this sofa, happening to cast my eyes on the mirror opposite, I saw myself as a corpse wrapped in the habiliments of death, and partly covered with a black and white drapery, beside me was an open coffin. This is sufficient. I have no time to lose. Farewell, my friend, we shall meet no more. Thunderstruck at these words I suffered the lady to depart without attempting to combat her opinion. This morning I received intelligence from her son that the prophecy had been fulfilled—she was no more.

When the Marshal had finished, I exclaimed

"You have told us a sad, dismal tale. I really fear I shall not be able to close my eyes all night for thinking of it.

and accused me publicly of having conspired against virtue itself! The virtue of such a sister and brother! I ask you, my friend, is not the idea truly ludicrous?

The Dauphiness bewailed his fall with many tears, at least, so I was informed by a lady of her suite, Madame de Campan. This lady was a most loquacious person. She frequently visited my sister in law, and, thanks to her love of talking, we were always well informed of all that was passing in the household of Marie Antoinette. However, the Dauphin was far from sharing the grief of his illustrious spouse. When informed of the dismissal of the Duke, he cried out, "Well, Madame du Barri has saved me an infinity of trouble—that of getting rid of so dangerous a man, in the event of my ever ascending the throne." The Prince did not usually speak of me in the most flattering terms, but I forgave him on the present occasion, so much was I charmed with his expression relative to the late minister, it afforded me the certainty that I should not have to dread the possibility of his recalling De Choiseul.

Whilst many were bewailing the downfall of the De Choiseuls, others, who had an eye more to self interest, presented themselves to share in the spoils of his fortune. These were the Princes de Soubise and de Conde, the Duc de la Vauguyon, the Comtes de Broglie, de Maillebois, and de Castries, the Marquis de Monteynard, and many others, equally anxious for a tempting slice of the Ministry, and who would have made but one mouthful of the finest and best.

The Marquise de l'Hopital came to solicit my interest for the Prince de Soubise, her lover. I replied that His Majesty would rather have the Marshal for his friend than his minister, that, in fact, the different appointments had taken place, and that, if the names of the parties were not immediately divulged, it was to spare the feelings of certain aspirants to the Ministry. Madame de l'Hôpital withdrew, evidently much disconcerted at my reply. Certainly M. de Soubise must have lost his reason when he supposed the successor of M. de Choiseul would be himself, the most insignificant of French Princes. He only could suppose that he was equal to such an elevation.

However this may be, he took upon himself to behave very much like an offended person for some days: but, finding such a line of conduct produced no good, he came round again, and presented himself as usual at my parties, whilst I received him as though nothing had occurred.

I had more difficulty in freeing myself from the importunities of MM. de Broglie and de Maillebois. I had given to each of them a sort of promise; I had allowed them to hope, and yet, when the time came to realise these hopes, I told them that I possessed much less influence than was generally imagined: to which they replied that they knew my power to serve them was much greater than I appeared to believe. After a while I succeeded in deadening the expectations of M. de Broglie; but M. de Maillebois was long before he would abandon his pursuit. When every chance of success had left him, he gave way to so much violence and bitterness against M. d'Aiguillon that the Duke was compelled to punish him for his impudent rage. I will mention the other candidates for the Ministry at another opportunity.

CHAPTER X

The Comte de la Marche and the Comtesse du Barri—The Countess and the Prince de Condé—The Duc de la Vauguyon and the Countess—Provisional minister—Refusal of the Secretaryship of War—Displeasure of the King—The Marechale de Mirepoix—Unpublished letter from Voltaire to the Comtesse du Barri—Her reply

THE Comte de la Marche had always evinced the warmest regard for me, and he sought, on the present occasion, to be repaid for his attachment. Both he and the Prince de Conde had their ambitious speculations in the present change of ministers, and both fancied that because their relative the Duke had governed during the King's minority, the right to the several appointments now vacant belonged as a matter of course to their family. The Count had already sent to solicit my interest, through the mediation of Madame de Monaco mistress to the Prince de Conde, and, as I shrewdly suspect, the occasional *chere amie* of himself. Finding this measure did not produce all the good he expected, he came, without further preface, to speak to me about it himself. Unwilling to come to an open rupture with him, I endeavoured to make him comprehend that the policy of the Sovereign would never permit his placing any of the administrative power in the hands of the Princes of his family, that he had consented, most reluctantly, to investing them with military command, and that it would be fruitless to urge more.

The Comte de la Marche appeared struck by the justness of my arguments. He replied

"Well, madam, since I cannot be a minister, I must give up even wishing to be one. But, for the love of heaven, entreat of the King to bestow his favours in the shape of a

little pecuniary aid. Things look ill at present—they may take a worse turn; but he may confidently rely on my loyalty and devotion. The supreme courts, driven to the last extremity, will make a stand, and princes and peers will range themselves under the banners. We well know how much this resistance will displease His Majesty. I pledge myself never to forsake your cause, but to defend it with my life: that is, if my present pressing necessity for money be satisfied. How say you, madam? Can you procure it for me?"

"Very probably I may be enabled to assist you," replied I; "but you must first inform me how much will satisfy you."

"Oh!" answered he, carelessly, "something less than the mines of Peru will suffice. I am not extravagant, and merely ask for so much as is absolutely necessary. In the first place, six hundred thousand livres paid down, and, secondly, a yearly payment of two hundred thousand livres more."

This demand did not appear to me unreasonable, and I undertook to arrange the matter to the Prince's satisfaction, well pleased to secure on my own side so illustrious an ally at so cheap a rate. I procured the assent of the King and the Comptroller-General; the six hundred thousand livres were bestowed on the Comte de la Marche in two separate payments, the pension settled on him, and, still further, an annuity of thirty thousand livres was secured to Madame de Monaco; and I must do the Count the justice to say that he remained faithful to our cause amidst every danger and difficulty, braving alike insults, opprobrium, and the torrent of pamphlets and epigrams of which he was the object. In fact, we had good reason for congratulating ourselves upon securing such devotion and zeal at so poor a price.

The Prince de Condé, surrounded by a greater degree of worldly state and consideration, was equally important to us, although in another way. He had in some degree compromised his popularity by attaching himself to me from

the commencement of my Court favour, and the reception he bestowed on me at Chantilly had completed his disgrace in the eyes of the nobility. He visited at my house upon the most friendly footing, and whenever he found me alone he would turn the conversation upon politics, the state of affairs, and the great desire he felt to undertake the direction of them in concert with me. He would add, "You might play the part of Madame de Pompadour, and yet you content yourself with merely attempting to do so, you are satisfied with possessing influence when you might exercise power and command. Your alliance with a Prince of the Blood would render you sole mistress in this kingdom, and should I ever arrive, through your means, to the rank of Prime Minister, it would be my pleasure and pride to *submit all things to you, and from this accord would spring an authority which nothing could weaken*."

I listened to him in silence, and for once my natural frankness received a check, for I durst not tell him all I knew of the King's sentiments towards him. The fact was that Louis XV. was far from feeling any regard for the Prince de Conde, and, not to mince the matter, had unequivocally expressed his contempt for him. He often said to me, when speaking of him, "He is a conceited fellow, who would fain induce persons to believe him somebody of vast importance. Louis XV. had prejudices from which no power on earth could have weaned him, and the Princes of the house of Conde were amongst his strongest antipathies. He knew a score of scandalous anecdotes relating to them, which he took no small pleasure in repeating."¹

However, all the arguments of the Prince de Conde were useless, and produced him nothing—or, at least, nothing for himself—although he procured the nomination of another to

¹ It forms no part of our duty to combat the opinion of Madame du Barri relative to the Prince de Conde. We shall therefore content ourselves with remarking that His Serene Highness displayed during the Revolution virtues which have acquired for him universal regard and esteem.—Ed

the Ministry, as you will hear in its proper place. But this was not sufficient to allay the cravings of his ambition; and, in his rage and disappointment, when open war was proclaimed between the King and his Parliament, he ranged himself on the side of the latter. He soon, however, became weary of his new allies; and, once more abandoning himself to the guidance of interest, he rejoined our party. Well did M. de Maupeou know men, when he said they all had their price; and, great as may be the rank and title of princes with plenty of money, they too may be had.

But amongst all the candidates for the Ministry, the one who occasioned me the greatest trouble was the Duc de la Vauguyon, who insisted upon it that he had done much for me, and complained bitterly of his unrequited services, and of my having bestowed my confidence on others. Up to the moment of the disgrace of the De Choiseuls, he had been amongst the most bitter of the malcontents; but no sooner were they banished from Court than M. de la Vauguyon forgot everything, and hastened to me with every mark of the warmest friendship.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I have much to scold you for; but I will forgive you all your past misdeeds if you will perform your promise to me."

"My dear father," I cried (for I used jestingly to style him so, in the same manner as I designated the Bishop of Orleans, *Gros Père*), "are you indeed displeased with me? That is very naughty; for you know I love you with all my heart."

"If it be true that you entertain any regard for me, why have you evinced so little towards me? Am I not of the right material for making ministers? Why then have you never procured my appointment to any of the vacant situations!"

"Stay, stay, my dear father!" cried I; "how you run on! To hear you talk, any person would suppose that places and appointments rained down upon me, and that I had only to say to you, My dear Duke, choose which you please; then, indeed, you might complain with justice. But you know very

well that all these delightful things are in the hands of the King, who alone has a right to bestow them as he judges best, whilst I am wholly powerless in the business "

" Say, rather," replied the Duke, quickly, " that you find it suit your present purpose to assume this want of power We all know that your *veto* is absolute with His Majesty, and it requires nothing more to obtain whatsoever you desire."

The Duc de la Vauguyon was powerful, and represented the whole of a party—that of the *religionists*, which was still further supported by the *Princesses*, but for this very reason the triumvirate, consisting of MM. d'Aiguillon, de Maupeou, and the Abbé Terray, would not have accepted his services at any price

The good Duke returned several times to the charge, sometimes endeavouring to move me by gentle entreaties, and at others holding out threats and menaces. Good and bad words flowed from his lips like a mixture of honey and gall, but when he found that both were equally thrown away upon me, he retired deeply offended, and, by the expression of his rage and disappointment, succeeded in incensing both the Dauphin and Dauphiness against me May heaven preserve you, my friend, from the anger of a bigot!

I think I have detained you long enough with the relation of the intrigues by which I was surrounded upon the dismissal of the De Choiseuls, and I will now return to the morning of the 24th of December When the exiles were fairly out of Paris, the King found himself not a little embarrassed in the choice of a Prime Minister Those who would have suited our purposes did not meet with the King's approbation, and he had not yet sufficient courage to venture upon electing one who should be disagreeable to us, he therefore hit upon a curious provisional election the Abbe Terray, for instance, was placed at the head of the War Department This measure was excused by the assertion that it would require the head of a financier to look into and settle the accounts, which the late minister had, no

doubt, left in a very confused state. Upon the same principle, M. Bertin was appointed to the direction of foreign affairs, and M. de Boynes was invested solely with the management of naval affairs. This man, who was Councillor of State, and First President of the Parliament of Besançon, knew not a letter of the office thus bestowed upon him, but then he was bound body and soul to the Chancellor, and it was worth something to have a person who, it might be relied on, would offer no opposition to the important reforms which were to be set on foot immediately. We required merely automata, and M. de Boynes answered our purpose perfectly well; for a provisional minister nothing could have been better.

The King had at length (in his own opinion) hit upon a very excellent Minister of War, and the person selected was the Chevalier, afterwards Comte, de Muy, formerly usher to the late Dauphin. He was a man of the old school, possessing many sterling virtues and qualities. We were in the utmost terror when His Majesty communicated to us his election of a Minister of War, and declared his intention of immediately signifying his pleasure to M. de Muy. Such a blow would have overthrown all our projects. Happily chance befriended us; the modern Cato declared that he should esteem himself most honoured to serve his Sovereign by every possible endeavour, but that he could never be induced to enter my service upon any pretext whatever. The strangeness of this refusal puzzled Louis XV. not a little. He said to me, "Can you make out the real motive of this silly conduct? I had a better opinion of the man. I thought him possessed of sense, but I see now that he is only fit for the cowl of a monk; he will never be a minister." The King was mistaken; M. de Muy became one under the auspices of his successor.

Immediately that the Prince de Condé was informed of what had passed, he recommenced his attack, and finding he could not be minister himself, he determined at least to be principally concerned in the appointment of one. He therefore proposed the Marquis de Monteynard, a man of such

well that all these delightful things are in the hands of the King, who alone has a right to bestow them as he judges best, whilst I am wholly powerless in the business "

"Say, rather," replied the Duke, quickly, "that you find it suit your present purpose to assume this want of power. We all know that your *veto* is absolute with the Magistracy and it requires nothing more to obtain what the Deputies of Paris had desired "

The Duc de la Va punishing the poor litigants for their the whole of a parliament.

further supped the general interest expressed for the Duc de the triumph greatly irritated the King.

and "Who would have thought," said he to me, "that a disgraced minister could have been so idolised by a whole Court? Would you believe that I receive a hundred petitions a day for leave to visit at Chanteloup? This is something new indeed! I cannot understand it."

"Sire," I replied, "that only proves how much danger you incurred by keeping such a man in your employment."

"Why, yes," answered Louis XV; "it really seems as though, had he chosen some fine morning to propose my abdicating the throne in favour of the Dauphin, he would only have needed to utter the suggestion to have it carried into execution. Fortunately for me, my grandson is by no means partial to him, and will most certainly never recall him after my death. The Dauphin possesses all the obstinacy of persons of confined understanding; he has but slender judgment, and will see with no eyes but his own."

Louis XV. augured ill of his successor's reign, and imagined that the cabinet of Vienna would direct that of Versailles at pleasure. His late Majesty was mistaken, Louis XVI. is endowed with many rare virtues, but they are unfortunately clouded over by his timidity and want of self confidence

The open and undisguised censure passed by the whole Court upon the conduct of Louis XV. was not the only thing which annoyed His Majesty, who perpetually tor-

doubt, left in a very confused state. Upon the same principle, M. Bertin was appointed to the direction of foreign affairs, and M. de Boynes was invested solely with the management of naval affairs. This man, who was Councillor of State, and First President of the Parliament of Besançon, who is ~~the~~ ^{the} letter of the office thus bestowed upon him, but comments and ~~said~~ ^{said} body and soul to the Chancellor, and it as the Medes and Persians, ~~said~~ ^{said} a person who, it might be to us poor monarchs imitating him, ~~the~~ ^{the} important reforms he pleases in his own kingdom, and ~~and~~ ^{and}ly. We required privilege in mine. After all, why should I ~~hear~~ ^{hear} our purpose other person's opinion. Let the whole world ~~ap-ld~~ ^{ap-ld} have condemn, I shall still act according to my own ~~judgment~~ ^{judgment}."

On my side I was far from feeling quite satisfied with the accounts I continued to receive from Chanteloup; above all, I felt irritated at the parade of attachment made by the Prince de Beauvau for the exiles, and I complained bitterly of it to the Maréchale de Mirepoix. "What can I do to help it?" she said; "my sister-in-law is a simpleton, who, after having ruined her brother, will certainly cause the downfall of her husband. I beseech you, my dear, out of regard for me, to put up with the unthinking conduct of the Prince de Beauvau for a little while; he will soon see his error and amend it." He did indeed return to our party, but his obedience was purchased at a heavy price.

Some days after the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul, I received a letter from M. de Voltaire. This writer, who carped at and attacked all subjects, whether sacred or profane, and from whose satires neither great nor small were exempt, had continual need of some powerful friend at Court. When his protector, M. de Choiseul, was dismissed, he saw clearly enough that the only person on whom he could henceforward depend to aid and support him, was she who had been chiefly instrumental in removing his first patron. With these ideas he addressed to me the following letter of condolence, or, to speak more correctly, of congratulation. It was as follows:

well that all these delightful things are in the hands of the King, who alone has a right to bestow them as he judges best, whilst I am wholly powerless in the business "

"Say, rather, replied the Duke, quickly, "that you find it suit your present purpose to assume this want of power. We all know that your *veto* is absolute with Magistracy and it requires nothing more to obtrude of Paris had desire "

The Duc de la Vaux punishing the poor litigants for their the whole of a parliament

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and "Who would have thought " said he to me "that such a graced minister could have been my friend and that no day will pass with Would you believe those of the Alps to repeat your much esteemed for leave to visit the honour to remain madam yours &c &c indeed! I can "

"Sire," I be quite sure, my friend, that I did not allow you incur an epistle to remain long unanswered I replied to the following words

SIR —The perusal of your agreeable letter made me almost grieve for the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul. Be assured that to his own conduct and that of his family may be alone attributed the misfortune you deplore

The regrets you so feelingly express for the calamity which has befallen your late protector do honour to your generous heart but recollect that your old friends were not the only persons who could appreciate and value your fine talents. To be esteemed worthy the honourable appellation of your patron is a glory which the proudest might envy and although I cannot boast of being a Minerva who after all was possibly no wiser than the rest of us I shall always feel proud and happy to serve you with my utmost credit and influence

I return you my best thanks for the wishes you express and the attachment you so kindly profess. You honour me too much by repeating my name on the bosom of the Alps. Be assured that I shall not be behindhand in making the saloons of Paris and Versailles resound with yours. Had I leisure for the undertaking I would go and teach it to the only mountains worthy of echoing it—at the foot of Pindus and Parnassus

I am sir yours &c &c

You perceive, my friend, that I intended this reply should be couched in the wittiest style imaginable, yet, upon reading it over at this lapse of time, it appears to me the silliest thing

doubt, left in a very confused state. Upon the same principle, M. Bertin was appointed to the direction of foreign affairs, and M. de Boynes was invested solely with the management of naval affairs. This man, who was Councillor of State, and First President of the Parliament of Besançon, who is ~~the~~ letter of the office thus bestowed upon him, but comments and ~~said~~ body and soul to the Chancellor, and it as the Medes and Persians, ~~said~~ a person who, it might be to us poor monarchs imitating him. ~~the~~ the important reforms he pleases in his own kingdom, and ~~and~~ly. We required privilege in mine. After all, why should I ~~hear~~ our purpose other person's opinion. Let the whole world ~~ap-ld~~ have ~~heard~~ me, I shall still act according to my own

CHAPTER XI

M d'Aligre—The Parliament mystified—The Prince de Conde and the Chancellor—The Chancellor and Madame du Barri—Madame du Barri and the Prince de Conde—The councillors are visited by two musketeers The Parliament in exile—Berthier de Sauvigny—New magistrates—Protesting princes and peers—Mesdames de Mirepoix and du Barri

THE destruction of the Parliaments was a necessary consequence of the exile of the Duc de Choiseul. Their continuance as a body was no longer possible, they had rendered themselves displeasing to the King and, so long as that of Paris existed, the *entree* to the Ministry was effectually closed against the Duc d'Aiguillon. Still, it was easier to resolve upon this momentous deed than to strike the fatal blow. The Duc de Choiseul, powerful as he had been, was but one man from amongst them, for the noble Duke de Praslin, his relative, was as nothing in the scale. The Duc de Choiseul, I repeat, was but a single individual, whilst the high magistracy formed an immense body, bound by the closest alliances to the nobility, and to the people by old sympathy. This sympathy arose from the need which the nation and Parliament mutually had of each other to support their privileges against the Royal power. Already at this period were springing up those ideas of independence which, by degrees, paved the way for the American War. Heaven grant that these mistaken notions of freedom may lead to nothing worse!

I have already said that the Parliament of Paris had ceased its functions. It was highly important to the Prince de Conde that they should resume them as soon as possible. Madame de Monaco, his mistress, who was endeavour

ing to obtain a separation from her husband, now found it impossible to gain that definite verdict which would enable her to give herself wholly up to the Prince without any further qualms of conscience. His Serene Highness came every day to lay his complaints before the Chancellor, and to threaten him with his heaviest wrath if he did not procure the termination of this affair. It did not entirely accord with the views of M. de Maupeou to come to an open rupture with the Prince; yet, on the other hand, he was equally at a loss how to manage matters with the Parliament, who proudly and obstinately persisted in their inaction. He therefore resolved upon adopting the following expedient.

M. d'Aligre, a man still in the prime of life, had been for the last three years First President. You are no stranger to his talents and good sense, both of which bid fair to advance him to the head of the magistracy; but in 1731 that all-devouring love of money, which has since become his leading passion, first manifested itself. This cupidity inspired the Chancellor with the hope of gaining him over to his purpose. He therefore sent the Prince de Condé to him. His Serene Highness did not confine himself to this visit. He went to each of the gentlemen of the Parliament, solicited their good offices, and promised them, in the name of the Chancellor, that if they would resume their duties, the edicts with which they were dissatisfied should be withdrawn. The Parliamentarians, seduced by this assurance, resumed their judicial functions. They began by deciding the suit of Madame de Monaco, and, after a short deliberation, declared her fully and duly separated from her husband, and, consequently, free mistress to live with whomsoever she should think proper.

When the Chancellor had tranquillised the Prince de Condé, he recommenced with more zeal than ever the hostilities for a time suspended; and the magistrates now saw, but somewhat too late, that they had been made the dupes of a private purpose. Their rage kindled at the dis-

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Upon the present occasion my eloquence was entirely thrown away. The Prince, when once he had mounted his high horse, began to rave about his ideas and other men's ideas of honour, &c, ending always with the same strain "I must be considered as a rogue, and the gentlemen of the Parliament must despise me, the conduct of the Chancellor is that of a worthless and unprincipled man," &c I could not do anything with him—neither reason nor flattery could move him, and after we had both discussed and disputed the matter for some time with equal obstinacy, I urged that the Prince should pardon M de Maupeou, if it were only in compliment to me as his mediator. The Prince, who was not over stocked with sense, did not perceive that this was the moment, for his own interest, to make a generous sacrifice to me of his petty resentment, and he haughtily replied that, desirous as he was of proving himself my most devoted servant, he could not for any consideration lend himself to sanction a dishonourable act either self or another. He even added that he saw no other means of re establishing himself in public opinion than by openly espousing the Parliamentary side of the question. This threat incensed me beyond all bearing, and I replied to the Prince that I should advise him never to think of such an act, under penalty of His Majesty's heaviest displeasure. He answered that his obedience to the King should be complete in all things which did not interfere with his principles and notions of honour, but that so long as he perceived the latter compromised, he would resist all authority which should prevent his properly vindicating himself. Thus we separated, mutually dissatisfied.

Upon the next I saw His Majesty I made no secret of what passed between the Prince and myself, for I thought, had I reason, that by being the first to mention the affair with

I should lessen the effect of his anger towards the Chancellor. The King, as I had expected, was much displeased at this occurrence. "I can foresee," he cried, "sad consequences from this measure. It will indeed be quite a scene—on one side, myself, quite alone, and, on the other, all the Princes of the Blood. La Fronde! la Fronde! we shall see your horrors again; and it is always the Royal power which is adjudged in the wrong upon these occasions. However, they will find I can support my prerogative; and, if they seek to lead a King of France by the nose, they shall not commence with me, most certainly."

Such was the effect produced by the conduct of M. de Maupeou on the mind of the King. It only served to confirm him in the severity of his resolution against the Parliaments. On the other hand, it excited the Parliamentarians, who considered themselves as most shamefully betrayed, to resist, by every possible means, the attacks of the Court party. Those of Paris were the first to set the example: they again ceased giving judgment in all cases referred to them, and even declared they would delay the meeting of Parliament, with a view to stop the monopoly of corn. They flattered themselves that by these resolutions they should secure the nation, particularly the lower orders, to their side.

Meanwhile M. de Maupeou took the best measures in his power to parry the blow he found it impossible to avert, and decided at once upon procuring the abolition of the old Parliament and the formation of a new one. He laid his plans in secret to induce certain members to separate from their colleagues and to form the nucleus of the new body he was desirous of forming. Upon this occasion he said to me, "I am sure of doing as I please with the clergy; the ecclesiastics are men ambitious of power and place; do but tempt them with those glittering baits, and you may lead them all over the world."

The united body of Parliamentarians forming so strong an opposition, it was thought a better stroke of policy to attack them individually. In consequence, on the night of the 19th or 20th of January, 1771, two musketeers, bearing

orders from the King, repaired to the house of each member of Parliament, whom they roused from their slumbers, by presenting a paper for their signature, in which they pledged their words to resume their suspended functions. Great expectations had been raised as to the effect of the visit of these musketeers at so unusual an hour. It proved successful, however, with only a very few. The greater number obstinately refused to affix their name, whilst those who had been surprised into a consent felt so much shame for their pusillanimity that, on the following day, they revoked it by a solemn act, in which they declared their firm intention of standing by and assisting their colleagues.

We waited at Versailles in no small anxiety as to the success of our grand nocturnal expedition. For my own part, I was sanguine of success, but the King, who understood their Parliamentary obstinacy better than I did, observed to me, "You form a wrong judgment. Those gentlemen I am prepared for their resistance, even are devils incarnate, who will certainly drive me mad."

The Chancellor still hoped to form his nucleus of a new parliament. "Tranquillise yourself, Sire," said he, "provided we can but secure a few out of the body, victory is in us; the others will be stigmatised as rebels, the ancient parliament will still subsist, and that will suffice to satisfy people who have suits of law still undecided. When we think of the ill success of the musketeers, 'Well, my lord,' asked Louis XV. of M. de Maupeou, "what has become of your nucleus?" It has melted like a snowball in pleasure, and your abbés have taken pattern by the others, should've evinced courage for the first time in their lives, only his privy view to annoy me."

M. de Maupeou was at first quite overwhelmed. The empty whiff of purpose displayed by the Parliamentarians upon this with consternation, he knew not what to say.

When by degrees, he resumed his accustomed confidence, he represented to the King that it was no longer with reason, display patience, and that he must now act

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When next I saw His Majesty I made no secret of what had passed between the Prince and myself for I thought, with reason, that by being the first to mention the affair

succeeded to the places, but not to the esteem with which their predecessors had been favoured. The councillors, amongst whom could be found none of those great names so distinguished for talents and probity which had shed a lustre on the late body, were now composed of men whose services were secured by the salary they received, and whose sole care was how to render their new employment more lucrative. M. de Maupeou was not long ere he discovered the melancholy truth that it is much easier to pull down an edifice than to build it up.

Judges were thus provided, such as they were; but advocates and procurators were still wanting. These gentlemen of the long robe, who most particularly prided themselves upon their honour, closed their offices and chambers. Such disinterested conduct, on the part of the procurators especially, was what we had by no means anticipated; but the resistance offered by the advocates was what chiefly annoyed the Chancellor, who became furious with rage and disappointment. However, once more rallying his powers, he succeeded, by dint of plotting, contriving, promises of money and place, in detaching from the discontented advocates four of their number, amongst whom was the famous Gerbier. After a time others joined the Chancellor, and the courts were once more supplied with the necessary officers.

The blow which had fallen upon the Parliament of Paris was far from intimidating those of the provinces, who seemed to glory in drawing down upon themselves the same Royal vengeance which had banished their colleagues. They were all successively destroyed, and afterwards recomposed after the manner of the Parliament of Paris. All this took place in the course of the year. I speak of it in this place that I may have done with the Parliaments. On New Year's Day the Chancellor had been nominated Chevalier des Ordres du Roi. This mark of favour drew upon him the following epigram:

"Ce noir vizir despote en France,
Qui pour régner met tout en feu,
Méritait un cordon, je pense,
Mais ce n'est pas le cordon bleu."

These witticisms were not the only arms employed against so many innovations. The Prince de Conde, who, like his grandfather, wished to play a distinguished part in the political dissensions, and the Duc de Chartres, who was bent upon acquiring a reputation at any risk, drew after them into the party of the malcontents, the former the Prince de Conti and the Duc de Bourbon, and the latter his father, the Duc d'Orleans. This taking up of the gauntlet inspired nearly a score of peers with fresh courage to present their protests against the late changes. The Duc de Duras was charged to present the protestation to the King. His Majesty took it and tore it into pieces, accompanying the act with a sharp rebuke to the poor Duke who had presented it. The unfortunate nobleman, who was more of a fool than a knave, nearly fainted when he heard these reproaches from his Royal master. However, he had sufficient tact to conceal his terror, and managed things so well that, although a *protesting peer*, he continued to keep on good terms with everyone.

When the Chancellor had completed his Parliament, which is still called after his name, he wished to consecrate its existence by a solemn act of the Royal presence, and in consequence announced a Bed of Justice for the 13th of April ensuing. The Princes of the Blood determined not to be there, and tried to persuade the Comte de la Marche to absent himself likewise, but this Prince, who had vowed fidelity to the King's party, and who had not as yet received more than half the sum promised him, declared that his conscience compelled him to obey His Majesty's commands.

"My dear cousin," said one of the malcontents, "it is an act of baseness.

"Agreed," replied the Comte de la Marche, "but it is one of profit likewise, the fruitful consequences of which you will envy me.

It must be avowed that the King did not greatly admire the office of presiding over his new magistracy. By some unaccountable remorse of conscience he found himself compelled to respect the virtue of that Parliament which his

own will had dissolved. We were talking together of the approaching 13th of April.

"I shall, I fear," said he, "play a silly part to-morrow—one which bids fair to compromise my Royal dignity for being seen amongst such a description of persons."

"Sire," cried I, "is it thus you speak of your Parliament?"

"No, upon my soul," exclaimed Louis XV., "I should have made a better selection. It is the Chancellor's Parliament, if it please you to call things by their right names."

"Nevertheless, he administers justice in your name."

"That is precisely what grieves me. I would much rather he should administer it in his own."

It was in vain I sought to change the King's opinion: he was immovably fixed. On the following day, as he was setting out, he called to the Duc de Duras, "My friend, take care of your pockets! Remember, we are not going to the very safest place."

However this might be, I wished to be of the party. Besides, I was desirous of showing myself upon the present occasion, that I might still more enrage the cabal. The Princesse de Valentinois, Madame de l'Hôpital and the Maréchale de Mirepoix accompanied me.

"What business have we here?" asked the Maréchale of me. "We shall be finely lampooned."

"What does that signify?" I replied. "You have the means of repaying yourself. Be satisfied, I beg of you; the King will reward your devotion to his cause."

In conversation such as this we passed the time till we arrived at the Palace. I own I experienced a slight feeling of dread as we crossed the halls and galleries. However, nothing of a disagreeable nature occurred: a trifling murmur was heard at the sight of me, but nothing more. In fact, I began to think that the French, accustomed to the title of the King's mistress, had no greater dislike to it than to any other—that of lady of honour, for instance.

CHAPTER VII

Royal sessions—The Duc de Nivernois—The portrait of Charles I—A few remarks upon a letter of Voltaire's—Verses addressed to the Chancellor—Verses against the Chancellor—M. Lebrun—Men of letters—The King and Madame du Barri—The Comte du Barri at Toulouse

THE people, especially the Parisians, still indulged in the hope of seeing their ancient magistracy recalled they could not give credit to a stretch of authority unheard of until the present hour, and they even jocularly threatened the new members that the ghosts of the old Parliament would come and pluck them from their seats. It was therefore necessary to prove to those who sighed for the return of the old Parliamentarians that the destruction of their friends was perfect and eternal, and, on the other hand, to bestow upon those who adhered to the Royal party some pledge which should satisfy them that they would never be forgotten or forsaken. These two motives determined the holding of the Bed of Justice. The Chancellor, having taken the King's orders, caused three edicts to be read at the assembly. The first declared the entire and irrevocable dissolution of the Parliament, which henceforward no longer existed, the second announced, in an equally peremptory manner, the abolition of the Court of Aids—a measure which had already been put into execution, but of which, for some reason I cannot recollect, I have until now forgotten to speak, finally, the third edict consummated the metamorphosis of the old Parliament into the new one.

According to established custom, the meeting should have concluded after these decrees had been read, but the King, wishing in some measure to declare his personal approbation of the acts of his minister, pronounced the following

words, which produced a great effect : " You have just heard my intentions ; I expect they will be conformed to. I command you to commence your functions on Monday next ; my Chancellor will install you. I prohibit all deliberations contrary to my will, and all petitions in favour of my old Parliament, for my mind is fixed. I can never change."

The King bestowed on these last words a degree of energy of which I did not believe him possessed. All who were present trembled in the inmost recesses of their mind. The impression produced by the King's assertion affected me so much that when I saw the Duc de Nivernois at the close of the meeting, knowing him to have been among the *protesting nobles*, I could not refrain from saying to him :

" My lord, I trust you will now withdraw your opposition. You heard the King affirm he should never change his mind."

" Yes, madam," replied the Duke, bowing most gallantly ; " but when His Majesty uttered those words he was only looking at you."

Nothing could have been more flatteringly turned than this answer. I know not whether my self-love may blind my judgment, but this seems to me one of the cleverest things ever said by M. de Nivernois, whose reputation for wit and sprightly repartee ranked so high. No person could have been endowed with a finer or more delicate taste than was the Duc de Nivernois, who was certainly one of the most gallant and well-mannered noblemen of the Court of Louis XV. He excelled as a poet, and composed fables remarkable for the pure simplicity of their style. I do not eulogise him thus from my own opinion alone, but rather repeat what I have heard from others whose judgment I highly respect. I would, indeed, excuse myself upon all subjects relative to literature ; for I must confess I have never cared to go further into the matter than as it concerned my own amusement. I own this, if to my shame even, and, what is still more unfortunate, I fear I shall live and die in the same way of thinking.

After the King had retired, the Chancellor, to complete

the great work, solemnly installed the court which had just been instituted. It was upon this occasion that the Marechal de Broglie, having observed to the Chancellor

"You look quite gay and yet calm, my good friend

"Just like yourself, Marshal, upon the eve of a battle, replied M. de Maupeou

And it was, in fact, a positive battle which had just been fought by the Chancellor, and a decided victory he had obtained. I am told that history affords no parallel instance of an individual ranking less than a Sovereign bringing about so prodigious a change. The end corresponded with the beginning and the Parliaments of France fell rapidly, one after another, in the same manner as the Parliament of Paris had been destroyed.

I again allude to this fact because I wish to expose one of the thousand calumnies which found its way into those '*Nouvelles a la Main*' in which my history has been most scandalously given. In an edition of the book in question, dated the 25th of March in the same year, is the following paragraph

'The Empress of Russia has deprived that distinguished amateur the Comte de Thiers, of his magnificent collection of pictures. M. de Marigny has had the mortification of seeing these splendid works of art pass into the hands of strangers for want of necessary funds to purchase the whole for the king. One only of these paintings has been left in France: it is a full length portrait of Charles I. king of England by Vandyck. The Comtesse du Barri who is ever foremost in displaying her taste for the fine arts desired it might be purchased for her, and paid 80,000 livres for it. In answer to the censure passed upon her for selecting this painting from so many others more likely to attract her notice the lady replied that she had purchased it as being a family portrait and explained that the Du Barri family, by reason of their foreign extraction, claimed kindred with the Stuarts. But this reason is mere flimsy pretence. It is well known amongst the initiated at Court that, at the instigation of the Chancellor, the portrait